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ABSTRACT

The social practices described and analyzed in this report are based on a 2-year ethnographic study conducted in San Francisco and Sacramento (California) in neighborhoods that are home to five new immigrant groups: (1) Mexicans, (2) Chinese, (3) Vietnamese, (4) Mien (Lao), and (5) undocumented refugees from El Salvador. Interviews with more than two dozen state and local officials and 170 ethnographic interviews identified state and local policies and the realities of immigrants' lives. The stories told by the diverse new immigrants reveal subtle differences in each group's adaptation to the new economic realities that make low-paying jobs harder to find and require that increasing numbers of women work. Among the many policy recommendations is a proposal for the reform of bilingual education programs. Universal access to bilingual education and monitoring and evaluation of existing programs are necessary to ensure that both children and adults have opportunities to learn English without wasting public resources. Other recommendations concern health care, workplace reforms, and flexible social support programs. (Contains 37 references.) (SLD)

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CALIFORNIA'S CHANGING FACES

New Immigrant Survival Strategies and State Policy

Michael Peter Smith and Bernadette Tarallo

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A Policy Research Program Report

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CALIFORNIA'S CHANGING FACES
New Immigrant Survival Strategies and State Policy

Michael Peter Smith and Bernadette Tarallo

Department of Applied Behavioral Sciences
University of California, Davis

California Policy Seminar
University of California
1993

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Contents

Executive Summary vii

Chapter 1 — Introduction 1

The Context 1
The Study 2
Methods 4
Structuring the Stories of Diversity 5

Chapter 2 — Contemporary Mexican Migration: The Increasing Significance of Gender 7
Becoming Transnational 9
Thrice Migrant: Edit's Story 11
Borderless Youth: Norma's Emergent Transnational Identity 14
Work and Family Transformation 17
Work, Mobility and the Renegotiation of Family Life: Maria's Story 18
Workplace Discrimination, Interethnic Conflict, and the Language Trap: Rosa's Story 23
The Increasing Significance of Gender: Implications for State Policy 32

Chapter 3 — State Violence and Survival: Voices of Salvadoran Refugees 35
The Weakening of Salvadoran Social Networks in San Francisco 37
The Limits of Kinship and Neighborhood Ties: Alicia 38
Politics, Work, and Displacement: José 43
Political Polarization and Social Support: The Oppositional Network 49
Becoming Oppositional: Sandra 49
Finding Sanctuary: Armando's Story 54
From Little Stories to Big Stories: State Policies for Unacknowledged Refugees 59

Chapter 4 — The Two Migrations from Vietnam: Voices of Difference 63
First- and Second-Wave Vietnamese Resettlement Experiences 63
Finding Employment and Using Social Services: Patterns of Difference 65
Between Two Worlds: Huu's Story 70
The Contradictions of Self-Sufficiency: Nhan's Story 78
The Changing Social Relations of Family Life 85
Combatting Intraethnic Violence 88
Understanding "Difference": Formulating State Policy for Vietnamese Refugees 90

Chapter 5 — The Iu-Mien Migration to California: A Compressed Transition to Modernity 95
Iu-Mien Traditions 96
The Secret War in Laos and the Production of Mien Refugees 98
The Mien of Sacramento 103
The Unemployed Mien 104
Backgrounds and Camp Experiences 104
Work and Social Service Use As Survival Strategies 106
Family Transformations and Generational Conflict 110
The Working Mien: Similarities and Differences 113
The Time Travelers 117
Kao 117
Saeng 118
Seng 120
The Previously Urbanized Working Mien 121
Learning from Difference: Effective State Policies for Mien Refugees 123

Chapter 6 — The New Chinese Immigration: A Wasted Brain Drain? 127
National Origins of the Chinese Immigrants 128
Work and Social Service Use in Sacramento 130
Changing Family Relations 141
Immigrants Helping Immigrants: Wong and Lin 145
Cultivating Immigrant Talent: Matching Work and Skills 154

Chapter 7 — Work, Welfare, and the New Immigration: Restructuring State Policy 157
A Five-point Strategy for Restructuring Welfare Policies 159
1. Universal Health Care 160
2. Reforming Bilingual Education 160
3. Work and Language Acquisition: Regulating the Workplace 162
4. Flexible Tailoring of Social Support 162
Mexican Migrants 163
Salvadoran Refugees 164
Vietnamese Refugees 165
Mien Refugees 166
New Chinese Immigrants 167
5. Expanded Employment of New Immigrants in Policy Assessment and Program Delivery Systems 168
Conclusion 169

References 171

Appendix — Refugees' Assistance, Social and Employment Service Entitlements 175

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In the past two decades California's economy has undergone basic changes, accompanied by a profound reconstitution of the state's demographic and ethnic composition. These transformations reflect a series of fundamental changes in the national and international political economy: the globalization of capital investment; the accelerated pace of transnational labor migration; and the rising tide of political refugees produced by military struggles in Southeast Asia and Central America, and more recently by the Cold War's abrupt end. These large-scale social processes are driving forces in what has come to be known as the "new immigration," a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has affected California more than any other state.

The state's capacity to absorb large-scale transnational migration has become severely strained in recent years. Federal government financial support for states significantly affected by the new immigration has been reduced by cutbacks in federal revenue sharing with state and local governments, leading to reductions in social welfare support for political refugees. The decade-long boom in the California economy, fueled by high levels of defense spending, came to an abrupt end as the collapse of the former Soviet Union ended the legitimation for a warfare economy. As the California economy has worsened, internal migration from other parts of the United States has slowed to a trickle and even begun to reverse, putting a brake on the real estate boom that had been a second engine of the state's economic growth in the early and middle 1980s. Meanwhile, in the face of rising unemployment, the need for public social support for existing residents began to increase precisely when the state's revenues failed to keep up with mounting expenditures. Locally, many county and municipal governments — dependent, since Proposition 13, on robust local growth and state subsidies to finance their expenditures — are simply "going broke."

Despite this diminished economic and fiscal capacity, new immigrants and political refugees, acting on the basis of the alternatives they face, continue to enter California in record numbers. In addition, birth rates among the state's newcomers from Asia and Latin America have been substantially higher than that of established residents. The term "compassion fatigue" has been coined to convey the public mood among Californians concerning this turn of events. Although today's newcomers from Asia and Latin America are clearly changing California by their economic presence and sociocultural practices, their political voices have yet to be heard. The absence of these voices has created a vacuum that has been filled by those who blame the new immigrants for all of California's current woes, ignoring their historical and structural roots. This is the context in which we conducted our study.

STUDY DESIGN AND METHODS

The social practices described and analyzed in this report are based on a two-year ethnographic study conducted in the Mission District of San Francisco and three neighborhoods in Sacramento, California, which are home to five new immigrant and refugee groups: Mexican and Chinese immigrants, Vietnamese and Mien refugees, and undocumented refugees from El Salvador. The goal of our study was to employ qualitative research methods to illuminate the complex relationship between work, welfare, and the new immigration in contemporary California. In-depth interviews with more than two dozen state and local government officials, representatives of public and private social service agencies, and community organizations concerning settlement mediation provided a key entry into the primary social networks and households of our groups, which were selected to represent the demographic attributes found within each ethnic group.

Our principal source of data consisted of a sample of 170 ethnographic interviews that capture the immigrants' and refugees' perceptions of reality, enriching our understanding of the institutional and cultural barriers and opportunities they experience in resettlement. In particular, the ethnographies paint a fascinating picture of key dimensions of the experience of new immigrant and refugee households vis-à-vis social origins; demographic background; patterns of migration and settlement; forms of work; involvement in social networks; access to and use of public and private social services; relationships with mediating social agencies and with government agencies; perceived utility of work, political voice, and migration as household survival strategies; and perceived consequences of their patterns of household reproduction. Our findings also shed new light on the character of new immigrant and refugee survival strategies in the face of economic change, the government fiscal crisis at all levels, and the reduced regulatory capacity of the federal government in this period of retrenchment.

This study of northern California cities is crucial for understanding the relationship between work, welfare, and the "new immigration" for several reasons. First, little research has been conducted on immigrants and refugees in northern California. As our study demonstrates, however, transnational migration to northern California is both similar to and different from the migration to southern California in important ways. For example, new immigrants and refugees do not use social services in the same ways throughout the state, and their patterns of work are equally diverse. Given such disparities, the tendency to make statewide generalizations on the basis of research conducted on new immigrants in southern California can produce misleading policy implications.

Second, a study of new immigrants and refugees in two of the three largest northern California cities allows comparisons between the local conditions they face (and on which their absorption depends) and those of other cities and regions with large concentrations of these newcomers. Central here is the specificity of metropolitan economies and local labor markets. The one certainty in the restructuring California economy is that the local economies of these cities will continue to change. These changing local and regional conditions will need to be observed closely to determine their effects on the successful absorption of new immigrants and refugees.

FINDINGS

Today, work and family life are far different than they were during earlier decades of this century, when traditional welfare policies were designed. The life chances of California's new immigrants are being shaped by three key features of this environment that are affecting all American households. First, to insure household survival, an increasing number of women must work. Second, unionized jobs in large-scale manufacturing, which were central to the absorption of new immigrants earlier in this century, have steadily declined in the face of the globalization of manufacturing and rising off-shore production. Third, employment growth in the amorphous service sector has occurred in both high-paid, professional/technical, business/financial services, and the kind of low-paid work held by most of the new immigrants we interviewed, with little in between. This pattern of economic development has been described by such metaphors as "dual economy", "dual city," or "social polarization," which evoke the specter of future social unrest if government policies fail to mediate the situation. The restructuring of labor-market opportunities in the state and nation is central to our understanding of the changing relationship between immigration, work, and welfare in contemporary California.

The stories told by the diverse new immigrants we studied reveal subtle differences in each group's adaptation to these changed circumstances. They have shown that men and women, urban and rural migrants, immigrant entrepreneurs and those who work for them, as well as earlier and more recent migrants within each ethnic group, differ considerably in both the resources they bring with them and the context of their reception in California. The differences our subjects spoke of express the increasing significance of gender relations and the renegotiation of gender roles within households as women in each group enter labor markets in record numbers to insure household survival. The social class and educational backgrounds of our subjects, and their past and present experiences in the changing world of work, are important elements of their stories and key ingredients in the new lives they are creating.

Mexican Migrants

Few social services are either available to or used by Mexican transnational migrants to Sacramento. The only services currently used are Medi-Cal by some pregnant Mexican women and WIC (Women, Infants, and Children, a supplemental food program) for subsequent young infant care. Even these health care services tended to be avoided by most of the women we interviewed because of their inability to speak English, lack of awareness about the availability of services, or, in the case of undocumented migrants, fear of deportation. Both the men and a majority of the Mexican women with children we studied rely heavily on the informal social support provided by their extended family networks and more generally on the social ties forged in the Latino enclaves encompassing their jobs and their neighborhood. While these networks of affiliation and cultural support have enabled the new Mexican migrants to survive in California and have enlivened elements of Mexican culture that have long been part of the state's history, both the men and women we interviewed are becoming increasingly isolated from the larger U.S. society, adapting more to the existing binational Mexican community in California than to the economic and

sociocultural mainstream. They live their daily lives apart from the rest of society in residential enclaves, and have become increasingly marginalized in enclave businesses or in secondary service-sector jobs requiring no use of English-language skills. This tends to breed a vicious cycle of marginality, as the very vitality of their cross-border cultural identity and their difficulty with English mark them as "others" and foster continuing discrimination against them in employment, housing, and basic respect. We found, further, that the family and neighborhood networks that the Mexican migrants in our study relied on for survival are becoming increasingly strained by the limited incomes found within the networks and by the heightened tensions between men and women as more and more women take jobs outside the home, forcing a renegotiation of traditional gender roles.

Salvadoran Refugees

The undocumented Salvadoran refugees we interviewed face employment and language barriers similar to those faced by Mexican transnational migrants and new immigrants from mainland China. They also have experienced the war-related stresses that characterize the Vietnamese and Mien refugees we studied. Moreover, the protracted civil war in El Salvador has been an ongoing source of internal hostility and mistrust among migrating Salvadorans, undermining the viability of informal social networks as sources of social support. The high cost of living in their chosen destination, the "sanctuary" city of San Francisco, which has the highest housing costs in the state, has placed further stress on the Salvadorans' already strained informal social support networks. Yet because of their virtual underground legal status, the Salvadorans were the least likely among the groups we studied to use any state-provided health or social services. Because of the dynamics of United States foreign policy in Central America the Salvadorans are de facto refugees who lack de jure recognition; as such they are not entitled to the many forms of assistance available to officially recognized refugees, such as the Vietnamese and Mien, who use these services extensively. The Salvadorans in San Francisco's Mission District work largely in low-paid, secondary labor market jobs that lack benefits like health insurance. They live in tremendously overcrowded housing conditions, and avoid even the handful of social services like WIC for which they might apply, because of fear of deportation. Some of the Salvadorans we interviewed would like to return to El Salvador in the future, but many remain suspicious of the current "peace process," and nearly all are aware that the war-ravaged economy they fled offers even more-limited job opportunities than the currently recession-ridden California economy.

Vietnamese Refugees

We found appreciable differences both among and between first- and second-wave Vietnamese refugees, the conditions they faced in migrating, and the changed context of their reception in the United States. The adjustment of first-wave settlers arriving after the fall of Saigon was relatively successful, owing in part to their class, educational, and occupational backgrounds, and in part to the more favorable context of their reception in less-uncertain economic times. Even among the first-wave refugees we found that the transition to U.S. society was often difficult, accompanied by forced departure, family separation, the need to adapt to a quite different culture, and gender and generational stress, as men and women and parents and children responded differently to the required renegotiation of gender and

generational roles. Despite these difficulties, the relative economic success of first-wave Vietnamese, their active involvement in Southeast Asian mutual assistance associations, and their use of then-abundant refugee resettlement assistance to achieve household self-sufficiency contributed to the image of Vietnamese refugees as a "model minority," that smoothly adapted to U.S. society with limited governmental assistance. Thus there is little understanding of the continuing adaptation problems experienced by second-wave Vietnamese refugees, who came to America later, with more-heterogeneous social backgrounds and fewer initial resources, and often after having spent years in Vietnamese reeducation camps or squalid Southeast Asian refugee camps. In addition to the usual cultural adjustment problems, the more-recently arrived refugees have encountered a climate of compassion fatigue, fueled by the deep recession and tightening of labor market opportunities. We found this latter group to be living in increasing isolation not only from mainstream society but also from the longer-term Vietnamese settlers who dominate the leadership of mutual assistance associations and other community-based organizations in Sacramento intended to serve Southeast Asian refugees. Some of these more recently arrived second-wave refugees have even been cut off from support by their own extended family members who arrived earlier and have achieved some degree of self-sufficiency.

Mien Refugees

Among Sacramento's Mien highlanders from Laos we found extensive household dependence on welfare assistance, with two-thirds of the male heads of households in our sample unemployed and relying on food stamps, Medi-Cal, general assistance, AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) assistance, and SSI (supplemental security income) payments to various members of their extended family households in order to survive. This pattern of welfare dependency, although somewhat less pronounced in the Bay Area, is a key component of the Mien survival strategy throughout California. Of the one-third of our Mien sample who were working males, half had entered the U.S. with transferable skills, such as small business experience in urban settings. The remaining employed males, however, had the same limited rural agricultural backgrounds as a large majority of the unemployed Mien we studied. The crucial difference between these successful refugees and their unemployed counterparts was that the former had all been enrolled in effective English-language acquisition classes with instructors or teachers' aides who spoke Mien or Laotian, while not one of the unemployed Mien respondents who had enrolled in such classes had a bilingual instructor or aide who spoke either language. The successful Mien who could speak English were able to make use of additional refugee assistance programs linking income support to the job training and referral components of the GAIN program (Greater Avenues to Independence) to become employed and move toward economic self-sufficiency.

New Chinese Immigrants

Although we found some salient differences between Hong Kong, Taiwanese, and mainland Chinese immigrants to Sacramento, particularly the latter group's lack of any financial capital, generally they are relatively highly educated and trained individuals with technical, manufacturing and service skills, as well as employment experience. Despite their backgrounds, however, all three groups experienced high levels of unemployment and

underemployment. The bulk of these immigrants, who came from mainland China, were employed either in small businesses owned by new immigrant entrepreneurs from Taiwan or Hong Kong, or in secondary-sector, mainstream employment. Many fault their Chinese employers for taking advantage of their vulnerability as impoverished new immigrants who lack English language skills and citizen rights, and are equally critical of U.S. immigration and social policies that make welfare available to some transnational migrants while leaving others to face a series of untenable choices: underfunded and culturally inadequate English-language acquisition programs, exploitation by enclave employers, underemployment in the mainstream economy, or unemployment and growing economic marginality.

Few social services are available to Chinese immigrants to Sacramento during their initial settlement, and, except for one center, our respondents were generally unaware of the services and community-based provider organizations that do exist. Their confinement to the ethnic employment enclave, the lack of citywide Chinese media in Sacramento, and their dispersed neighborhoods contributed to these immigrants' unawareness of available assistance. The lack of resources available to Chinese immigrants has led to a heavy reliance on the already overburdened immediate family. Although many had long-settled extended family members in the U.S., the latter were often unwilling to assist the new immigrants because of their differing values, concerns, and social positions. Consequently, parents worked exhausting jobs to put their children through school and adult children languished in enclave employment to support older parents, postponing their acquisition of skills for mainstream employment.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The fundamental premise underlying traditional social welfare policies — that men are the key household breadwinners, earning a sufficient income to allow women to care for children, the sick, and their families — has lost both its accuracy as a description of family life and its legitimacy as a policy justification. Given the reduced availability of women as unpaid caregivers as they enter the labor market in ever-larger numbers, the need for social services to provide care to children, the sick, and the elderly has increased dramatically, precisely when the fiscal basis of support for such services and the cultural support for the welfare state as an institution have reached an all-time low.

Achieving the goal of economic self-sufficiency for California's new immigrants will require both general policies that cut across all groups, and others specifically tailored to the unique cultural, historical, and contemporary situations of each group. Their circumstances will require a restructuring of today's relatively inflexible welfare system into a more flexible combination of services that takes into account the changing character of work and family life that are part of today's world.

1. Universal Health Care

Many of California's political refugees, particularly those from Southeast Asia, facing the choice of work or health, have chosen to remain on AFDC or general assistance for

extended periods primarily because it entitles them to Medi-Cal coverage. Although they are quite willing to work, and prefer work to welfare, they have been unable to find jobs that include employee health care benefits. If they were made part of a universal health care system for all California residents, a major incentive for them to remain unemployed would be eliminated. The health care needs of California's other new immigrants and refugees from Latin America and Asia who are currently working in secondary labor market and ethnic enclave jobs that lack benefits would also be met by their inclusion in a universal coverage system. If the public funds currently spent on Medi-Cal were separated from funds spent on income support programs (like AFDC) by altering eligibility requirements, they could be channeled into a more general health care delivery system such as the universal health coverage plans now being debated and shaped at the national and state government levels.

Separating health provision from AFDC would eliminate the forced choice between work and health, a major incentive for choosing welfare. Finally, the fiscal basis of the consolidated system would be made more secure by adding the intergovernmental support devoted to the current Medi-Cal system for unemployed low-income Californians and political refugees to a more general system for financing universal health care coverage.

2. Reforming Bilingual Education

English as a Second Language (ESL) and other bilingual education programs in California are currently provided by a wide array of both voluntary nonprofit and profit-making organizations, which are often financed under contract using state and federal funds, in addition to the public school programs financed by the state Department of Education. One of our major findings is that the language acquisition programs currently available to California's new immigrants vary considerably in effectiveness.

Nearly all of the respondents in each of the five groups we studied regarded the acquisition of English language skills as critical to their future success and mobility in this country. Although a majority of the state's new immigrants are likely to need effective bilingual programs, only legally recognized refugees are likely to be enrolled in such programs in significant numbers. Given the importance of English-language acquisition, universal access to effective ESL and bilingual education programs should be made a major state policy priority, with diverse enough programs to accommodate the increasing diversity of the state's population. Because existing programs varied considerably in effectiveness, we recommend regular auditing and review of those that rely on state funds, monitoring not only the language skills of the teaching staff but also the appropriateness of the teachers to their students' cultural backgrounds. This would insure that immigrants and refugees relying on the programs would have the greatest chance to learn English as a result of their efforts, and prevent the squandering of resources on ineffectual programs. Access to culturally appropriate bilingual teaching assistants for children in public schools is particularly important and may help to prevent the problems that some new immigrant and refugee youth have experienced, such as the gang-related activities among the second-wave Vietnamese and Mien youth in our Sacramento samples.

3. Regulating the Workplace

Our ethnographies of Mexican migrants, undocumented Salvadoran refugees, and new immigrants from mainland China showed that the failure of many of California's new immigrants to learn English is also related to their lack of opportunity to speak English outside of class because they live in linguistically homogeneous neighborhoods and work in either enclave businesses or ethnically segregated workplaces in the mainstream economy. Better enforcement of open housing laws and more effective enforcement in two specific areas of labor law would increase the likelihood that new immigrant workers with limited English-language skills will have a greater opportunity to speak and learn English in their workplaces.

First, California's immigrant entrepreneurs, who rely entirely on a non-English-speaking workforce drawn either from their own or other new immigrant groups, should be required to comply with statutes regulating minimum wages, working hours, child labor practices, and workplace safety and sanitary conditions. This may lead to the shutdown of exploitative workplaces, but the short-term cost in increased unemployment must be weighed against the longer-term benefits likely to result from vigorous enforcement of laws against unfair labor practices. Second, strong enforcement of laws against discriminatory hiring and working conditions by mainstream employers can be expected to improve the workplace context in which English-language skills are acquired. Opening up more mainstream employment opportunities for new immigrants with limited English-language skills in positions that do not specifically require such skills will increase the frequency of the new immigrants' exposure to spoken English, and the likelihood that they will succeed in learning the language.

Our finding that ethnically segmented workplaces are a major barrier to English-language acquisition for both Latinos and Asians, as well as the bitter denunciations we heard concerning exploitative working conditions, suggest that we need to treat ethnic segmentation of labor markets and employment in enclave economies as a problem rather than a solution for many new immigrant workers.

4. Flexible Tailoring of Social Support

The social support needs of the groups we studied were often different, stemming from their different migration experiences and cultural backgrounds. For example, members of each of the three refugee groups, including the state's unrecognized Salvadoran refugees, experience recurrent psychological stress as a result of traumatic events in, and violent uprooting from, their homelands. Some of the Mexican women we interviewed had also been traumatized during their migration by abusive Mexican police officials, dishonest smugglers, and threatened or actual rapes. To cite another example of differences that have policy relevance, not all of the Mien refugees need children's day-care services, since the continuing vitality of extended family networks enabled some grandparents living under the same roof to serve as baby sitters and care givers to young children. Often these large families were able to survive as household units by combining work and public assistance and providing their own day-care. At the opposite extreme, most of the Salvadoran refugees, whose family- and village-based social support networks were most overstressed by the fragmenting effects of their country's civil war, needed formal day-care services. Because of their largely

undocumented status and limited incomes, however, they were the least likely to be able to purchase or receive day-care, or provide it on their own. These examples illustrate the need to flexibly combine social services for California's new immigrants and refugees to account for the differing needs of each group. In the discussion below we suggest ways to effectively combine social programs for each of the groups we studied.

Mexican Migrants

To combat their growing isolation and marginalization from mainstream society, we recommend that documented Mexican migrants be made eligible for health care through participation in the kind of universal system discussed above. In addition, we recommend increased state funding for bilingually staffed neighborhood and mobile health clinics responsible for providing outreach and preventive care for Mexican migrants who currently tend to seek help only in the gravest of emergencies.

The services for which our Mexican respondents wish they were eligible are job training and bilingual education to help them move out of low-paying, secondary labor market jobs, rather than such supplementary social services as day-care and transportation assistance, which are already being provided by their family, friendship, and neighborhood networks. They (as well as members of other groups) thought it crucial to improve access to effective ESL programs for adults and bilingual education for children in the early grades of public schools; many see the ability to speak English as even more important than being documented to obtain the "good jobs" they all desired. Thus, we recommend providing the GAIN program to documented Mexican migrants in conjunction with bilingual education. This would entail separating GAIN — a mandatory program available only to recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, like many of our second-wave Vietnamese and Mien refugees — from its currently exclusive connection to AFDC. By increasing the basic employment skills of new Mexican migrants through language acquisition programs and job training, and expanding their access to preventive and regular health care, they will be able to use lower-paid entry-level jobs to survive without being trapped by them, or forced to choose welfare instead of work in order to have access to health care.

Salvadoran Refugees

If the U.S. government were to grant refugee status to these undocumented migrants, we would recommend the same policy changes as we did for new Mexican immigrants. In addition, however, because of the weakened informal social support networks we found among the Salvadorans and the war-related traumas they have experienced, we recommend providing the full array of refugee assistance programs now available to legally recognized refugees under the federal Refugee Resettlement Program administered in California by the Department of Social Services.

Short of this recognition — which is a national rather than a state issue — state policymakers could initiate three more-limited actions to ameliorate the harsh living conditions we found among San Francisco's undocumented Salvadoran refugees. First, the state could offer special improvement grants for improved ESL and bilingual education programs to voluntary organizations operating in Salvadoran neighborhoods and to public schools serving large numbers of Central American refugees, provided the selected programs

can be shown to be working well. Second, California regulatory bodies could vigorously enforce existing antidiscrimination statutes regulating unfair labor practices in order to reduce ethnic and linguistic segmentation in employment. Third, the state could establish eligibility criteria for selecting community-based organizations capable of contracting with it to deliver services (e.g., ESL and bilingual education, employment training and referral, vocational education, and child care), and fund programs with effective mechanisms for actively involving refugees in bilingual, informal settings. This would enable Salvadorans, as residents of Latino neighborhoods, to act without fear of deportation. Most of the Salvadorans we interviewed remain "underground," living completely apart from mainstream society and the community organizations that might become resources for their survival and self-affirmation. Connecting socially isolated refugees to mediating institutions at the grassroots level has proven beneficial to the Salvadoran refugees we interviewed who maintain ties to the Sanctuary Movement. This connection has helped them to learn English, find work, and obtain other needed material as well as socioemotional support.

Vietnamese Refugees

In addition to the health care, language acquisition, and job training reforms described above, we recommend the following policy mix for second-wave Vietnamese refugees: (1) pressuring the federal government to maintain its current package of refugee assistance rather than cutting it back; (2) targeting middle-age second-wave Vietnamese refugees for English-language acquisition and job training programs rather than simply maintaining them on welfare, to reduce the pressures on their children to provide financial support to the extended family household while attending school; (3) focusing on the types of skills in job training programs that are most likely to make the refugees employable in the mainstream economy; (4) enforcing labor laws and antidiscrimination statutes to open up more employment opportunities in bilingual workplaces; and (5) funding research and dissemination programs to insure that the providers of mental health, social work, school counseling, and youth services are familiar with the special needs of second-wave Vietnamese refugees.

Mien Refugees

We strongly recommend that the ESL programs in which Mien refugees are enrolled be closely monitored to insure that their staffs include adequate numbers of bilingual instructors and teacher aides fluent in their clients' language. Moreover, all ESL programs supported by state funds should be subject to regular monitoring to insure their effectiveness. In a period of scarce resources, viable programs must be rewarded and ineffectual programs weeded out.

The Mien respondents we interviewed who previously worked in the U.S. but are now on welfare all gave lack of health insurance as their reason for leaving their jobs — providing further support for our recommendation to separate income support programs from Medi-Cal and absorb the latter into a universal health care system that would cover all Californians. Even if these two steps are taken, many Mien people will still need some types of social support. The greatest number are from rural villages, with little knowledge of or experience with Western culture — "time travelers" who have had to make the greatest cultural leap in coming to California from a preindustrial, tribal society. Since their extended

family networks remain viable and their experience with mainstream employment is limited, we recommend spending less on the current supplemental services entitlements (e.g., day-care, transportation, emergency assistance, and optional county services) and channeling more into bilingual education, job training, referral and placement services, such as those currently provided through the GAIN program.

Chinese Immigrants

These immigrants' scientific, technical, and manufacturing skills provide a base from which to accelerate their economic integration and self-sufficiency, which could be done by making the GAIN program available to supplement, update, and adapt their skills for eventual employment in the mainstream economy. Moreover, GAIN could direct physicians, doctors, and engineers to recertification programs, or retrain them for job placement in related fields where they can more closely use their existing skills. Effective ESL programs must be provided in conjunction with GAIN's job training and placement services to increase the likelihood of obtaining mainstream employment. In addition, the state should identify, fund, and monitor effective community-based organizations that provide services directed to placing Chinese immigrants in mainstream employment.

Almost all of the Chinese immigrants we studied lacked health care coverage. Except in the case of serious illness, they generally did not use medical care but treated themselves. A universal health insurance plan to cover all Californians would also provide new Chinese immigrants with urgently needed medical care coverage. Implementation of these recommendations, and enforcement of nondiscriminatory hiring and employment statutes, should facilitate the movement of Chinese immigrants from the ethnic enclave into mainstream employment so they can become self-sufficient.

5. Expanded Employment of New Immigrants in Policy Assessment and Program Delivery Systems

Employing more of the new immigrants in policy assessment and program delivery is an additional way to render state policy systems more flexible and effective in moving immigrants toward economic self-sufficiency. They are most aware of immigrants' needs and have the greatest concern for improving conditions in the key delivery systems providing state and local services to new immigrants, namely, schools, ESL and bilingual education programs, employment training programs for those with specific skills, day-care facilities, and health care clinics. The stories we heard from Mexican women, Chinese engineers, and Mien highlanders speak to the effectiveness of such workers in mobile health clinics, in teaching technical skills in fields like computer science, and as teacher aides in schools and ESL programs. Increased employment of new immigrants in bilingual school programs at the elementary level is especially crucial in light of a recent study of California bilingual education that showed that by the time students with limited-English skills reach secondary schools, the schools cannot effectively deliver even the basic courses in math, science, and social sciences required for high school graduation.

A successful public-private partnership in San Francisco's Mission District that actively recruits and trains non-English-speaking newly arrived Central American and Mexican women to run day-care centers could serve as a model for designing appropriate new

employment opportunities for new immigrants in other health, education, and welfare delivery arenas. One must caution, however, that shared nationality alone is an insufficient basis for allocating state funds to such partnerships, to which some of our respondents can attest. As careful assessment is an essential ingredient of effective policy design, we recommend that the state regularly evaluate all programs intended to assist the resettlement, social adaptation, and economic integration of California's new immigrants and refugees in order to avoid waste, reassure skeptical taxpayers, overcome fears of social experimentation, and determine *what works, for whom, and why.* In the face of diminishing resources to fund and restructure effective programs, the need for policy evaluation research to legitimize state policies is now greater than ever. Our own experience with a bilingual, multicultural research team recruited for this two-year project suggests that employing new immigrants in the policy assessment research that will be needed to insure the accountability of new immigrant-related public-private partnerships will strengthen the quality of the research and the accuracy of the assessments.

CONCLUSION

We believe these recommendations constitute a coherent policy response that addresses both the root causes and complex consequences of the new immigration. The political feasibility of our recommendations, however, will depend on a clear understanding that key assumptions frequently made about the new immigration and about immigrants' relationship to work and welfare are plainly mistaken. Our policy proposals, rooted in study findings, strongly challenge the mistaken assumptions that must be confronted and corrected in public discourse if our policy proposals are to be taken seriously.

Accordingly, we end this summary by identifying four myths we think our study has debunked: (1) the belief that the ethnic enclave economy is an adequate employment channel, providing genuine economic opportunity for new immigrants; (2) the belief that new immigrant social networks always can be counted on to provide effective informal social support for California's new immigrant groups in the absence of formal social policy supports; 3) the belief that new immigrants and refugees are responsible for taking away jobs, when in fact structural changes in the global economy, significant cuts in defense spending, and welfare retrenchment have transformed the California labor market and reduced job opportunities; and 4) the belief that new immigrant integration will resolve itself in future generations in the absence of state policies. Taken together, these beliefs constitute a kind of mythology that denies the lived experience of the people to whom we have talked and from whom we have learned.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

THE CONTEXT

In the past two decades California's economy has undergone basic changes, accompanied by a profound reconstitution of the state's demographic and ethnic composition. These transformations reflect a series of fundamental changes in the national and international political economy: the globalization of capital investment; the accelerated pace of transnational labor migration; and the rising tide of political refugees produced by military struggles in Southeast Asia and Central America, and more recently by the Cold War's abrupt end. These large-scale social processes are basic driving forces in what has come to be known as the "new immigration," a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that has affected California more than any other state.

The state's capacity to absorb the large-scale transnational migration has become severely strained in recent years. Federal government financial support for states significantly affected by the new immigration has been reduced by cutbacks in federal revenue sharing with state and local governments, leading to reductions in social welfare support for political refugees. The decade-long boom in the California economy, fueled by high levels of defense spending, came to an abrupt end as the collapse of the former Soviet Union ended the basic legitimation for a warfare economy. As the California economy has worsened, internal migration from other parts of the United States has slowed to a trickle and even begun to reverse, putting a brake on the real estate boom that had been a second engine of the state's economic growth in the early and middle 1980s. Meanwhile, in the face of rising unemployment, the need for public social support for existing residents began to increase precisely when the state's revenues failed to keep up with mounting expenditures. Locally, many county and municipal governments — dependent, since Proposition 13, on robust local growth and state subsidies to finance their expenditures — are simply "going broke." Despite this diminished economic and fiscal capacity, new immigrants and political refugees, acting on the basis of the alternatives they face, continue to flow into California in record numbers.

The term "compassion fatigue" has been coined to convey the public mood among California's established residents for this turn of events. Although today's newcomers from Asia and Latin America are clearly changing California by their economic presence and sociocultural practices, their political voices have yet to be heard. The absence of these voices has created a vacuum that has been filled by those who blame all of California's current woes on the "new immigration," ignoring their long historical and structural roots. This is the contemporary context in which we conducted this study.

THE STUDY

The social practices described and analyzed in this report are based on a two-year ethnographic study conducted in the Mission District of San Francisco and three neighborhoods in Sacramento, California, that are home to five new immigrant and refugee groups: Mexican and Chinese immigrants, Vietnamese and Mien refugees, and undocumented refugees from El Salvador. San Francisco's Mission District has been a Central American enclave since the 1930s, and is now estimated to house a majority of the more than 100,000 Salvadorans now living in San Francisco. Most of the Salvadorans have arrived in the past decade, fleeing the civil war in El Salvador. Downtown Sacramento, which includes the inner-city Southside and Alkali Flat neighborhoods, is home to a high concentration of mainland Chinese immigrants and Southeast Asian refugees, as well as a Mexican migrant population centered around a shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe. South Sacramento, which includes the Oak Park and Lemon Hill neighborhoods, is an outlying, mixed residential and commercial district in which numerous Vietnamese-owned small businesses serve a sizable settlement of Southeast Asian refugees. The largest U.S. concentration of Mien refugees from the Laotian highlands is located in Oak Park.

This study of northern California cities is crucial for understanding the relationship between work, welfare, and the "new immigration" for several reasons. First, little research has been conducted on immigrants and refugees in northern California. As our study demonstrates, however, transnational migration to northern California is both similar to and different from the migration to southern California in important ways. One similarity is the role the sanctuary movement has played in mediating the settlement of Salvadoran refugees in both San Francisco and Los Angeles, the two cities that now account for nearly two-thirds of El Salvador's undocumented refugee population in the entire United States. We found, however, that the undocumented Salvadoran workers in San Francisco make very little use of public assistance, in contrast to the findings of a recent study on social services utilization by other Latino migrants in San Diego County (see Rhea and Parker, 1992). Given such disparities, the tendency to make statewide generalizations on the basis of studies of new immigrants in southern California can produce misleading policy implications. As this study illustrates, new immigrants and refugees do not use social services in the same ways throughout the state. Their patterns of work are equally diverse. The highly educated mainland Chinese migrants whom we interviewed in Sacramento, for example, are either unemployed because they lack English language proficiency, or are underemployed in dead-end, low-wage work in businesses owned by new immigrant entrepreneurs from Hong Kong. In contrast, the relatively robust ethnic enclave economy in the San Gabriel Valley was created primarily by new Chinese immigrant entrepreneurs and workers from Taiwan. Recognizing such differences will enable the crafting of more precise and flexible employment, educational, and social welfare policies for the state's diverse newcomers.

Second, a study of new immigrants and refugees in two of the three largest northern California cities allows comparisons between the local conditions they face (and on which their absorption depends) and those of other cities and regions with large concentrations of these newcomers. Central here is the specificity of metropolitan economies and local labor

markets. Thus, for example, although Los Angeles has the most diverse metropolitan economy in the state, with a wide array of industrial and service jobs in which immigrants and refugees concentrate, and San Francisco has fewer industrial jobs, the smaller city has a large, high-paid business and financial services sector, which has sustained a wide variety of low-paid service jobs employing new immigrants and undocumented refugees. In contrast, Sacramento, which has less factory employment than either of these cities, has a wide variety of both public-sector and high- and low-paid private service-sector jobs, the latter of which provide an employment niche for the city's new immigrants, undocumented circular migrants, and Southeast Asian refugees. While the local conditions in these three major cities differ, leading to differences in their inclusion of newcomers, all three cities have a number of light industrial sweatshops employing immigrants and refugees. Such immigrant sweatshops in Sacramento are light years away from the hearing rooms of the state capital, yet operate only a few blocks from the capitol dome. The one certainty in the restructuring California economy is that the local economies of these cities will continue to change. These changing local and regional conditions will need to be observed closelyto determine their effects on the successful absorption of new immigrants and refugees.

Our choice of San Francisco was based on several obvious considerations: the city's long history as a destination for new immigrants, its prominent role as an international financial center, and its dense concentration of Salvadoran refugees, making its Latino migration patterns comparable to those of such other major U.S. cities as Los Angeles, Houston, and Washington, DC. Our choice of Sacramento, although clearly influenced by its proximity to our campus-based research team at the University of California, Davis, was also guided by the city's growing, and heretofore virtually unnoticed, importance to the state's economy and pronounced ethnic diversity resulting from the "new immigration." Although Sacramento has been long-considered a dusty backwater region in comparison to the cosmopolitan cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles, Sacramento County is now the 30th largest Standard Metropolitan Statistical Area in the U.S., surpassing that of San Francisco and approaching that of San Jose. Moreover, the new immigrant and refugee resettlement patterns from coastal to inland California found in Sacramento, and the challenges its rapidly increasing, diverse population presents, are now being reproduced in a variety of other cities throughout the Central Valley. In Fresno and Merced, for example, more than 30 percent of the high school students now are Hmong refugees from Southeast Asia. Portraying the settlement patterns and adaptive strategies of Sacramento's Mexican transnational migrants and Southeast Asian refugees should prove useful to other similarly developed cities facing a rapid influx of new ethnic groups.

The goal of our study was to employ qualitative research methods to shed light on the complex relationship between work, welfare, and the new immigration in contemporary California. The study raised five specific sets of questions:

1. How do the groups differ in the extent to which they develop household survival strategies involving various combinations of moving, working, and using social services? Among the issues examined were: how the social context affecting each group differs by nationality, ethnicity, class, and gender; in light of these differences, what the groups' household strategies are at different stages; how members of each group conceptualize the

process of seeking and accepting assistance from public programs; and whether they view program benefits as supplements to work, alternatives to work, or political entitlements.

2. What kind of work do the new immigrants and refugees perform? We examined whether their work provides sufficient means for survival and, if not, which social services they use, if any, as a component of their survival strategies.

3. Once migrants arrive in a new location, do they remain in their initial locality, or do they move? We examined if they move, where they move to, why, and whether their moves are intentional or are necessitated by the context of their reception in different localities.

4. How do the groups differ in the extent to which they rely on community-based organizations as a component of their household survival strategies?

5. In light of answers to these questions, how can state health, education, and welfare services be structured more effectively to mediate the resettlement, social adaptation, and economic integration of California's new immigrants and refugees?

Methods

Our field research employed a multidimensional approach that included in-depth interviews with more than two dozen state and local government officials, representatives of public and private social service agencies, and community organizations concerning the settlement mediation process, which provided a key entry into the primary social networks and households of our selected groups. Our principal source of data consisted of a sample of 170 household-level ethnographic interviews drawn from among the two Latino and three new Asian immigrant and refugee groups living in the four neighborhoods. The households were selected by a snowball sampling technique designed to represent the demographic attributes found within each ethnic group. While conducting interviews with public and private officials we recruited and trained a multicultural, bilingual research team consisting of Latino, Vietnamese, and Chinese graduate and undergraduate students and a Mien-speaking researcher. Twelve field researchers, translators, and transcribers were involved in the collection process during the two-year study.

Because of the time and cost involved in conducting, translating, and transcribing the lengthy qualitative ethnographies, we were able to complete only 170 interviews of the 250 originally planned, distributed as follows: 40 Salvadorans, 35 Mexicans, 35 Vietnamese, 30 Mien, and 30 Chinese. In the case of the Mien households, to which it proved very difficult to gain effective access, we were forced to rely on a more mediated interview method. As there were no Mien students enrolled at the University of California, Davis at the time of our study, we turned to the Mien community itself to select a field interviewer, choosing a person who had previous experience in providing social services to Sacramento's Mien community. As Mien is not a written language we were unable to translate our open-ended interview guide into Mien, forcing us to redesign the guide with our fieldworker so he could ask questions in Mien and record the responses in writing in English. Despite this difference in field methods, our chapter on the Iu-Mien migration to California reveals important dimensions of the unique and difficult historical experience of Mien displacement, transplantation, and resettlement.

Structuring the Stories of Diversity

The report's qualitative material captures the immigrants' and refugees' perceptions of reality, enriching our understanding of the institutional and cultural barriers and opportunities they experience in resettlement. In particular, the ethnographies paint a fascinating picture of key dimensions of the experience of new immigrant and refugee households vis-à-vis social origins; demographic background; patterns of migration and settlement; forms of work; involvement in social networks; access to and use of public and private social services; relationships with mediating social agencies and with government agencies; perceived utility of work, political voice, and migration as household survival strategies; and perceived consequences of their patterns of household reproduction. Our findings also shed new light on the character of new immigrant and refugee survival strategies in the face of economic change, the government fiscal crisis at all levels, and the reduced regulatory capacity of the federal government in this period of retrenchment.

Ensuring the representativeness of these voices required a time-consuming and careful process of selection. Over the course of several months we read and reread all of the transcripts in each group in order to unearth the basic thread of each narrative chapter. This immersion in the ethnographic data was accompanied by meetings with members of our field work team to clarify issues and assist us in selecting voices whose individual stories typified more-general characteristics of each group's resettlement experience, and also expressed the most salient differences within each group.

The selection process required exclusion as well as inclusion. Within each group we decided to exclude a few dramatic and colorful individual stories from detailed narration because they did not typify central tendencies within the group. To illustrate how this worked, one of our longest, most vivid, and most personally interesting stories was told by a former member of the FMLN in El Salvador who had lost both legs in the civil war. Yet because he was the only former guerilla among our 40 Salvadoran subjects and is one of only two Salvadorans we interviewed who is doing well economically in San Francisco, we decided not to narrate his story but to select, instead, four other stories that were more typical of our interviewees' daily life in both El Salvador and San Francisco's Mission District. Thus, while the voices we have featured in the five narrative chapters are those of individuals, their stories are emblematic of the ways in which more general social relations and processes are being renegotiated in contemporary California.

The report is divided into five narrative chapters — a separate one for each of the groups — and a conclusion. In the first two chapters we give voice to our Latino subjects, and in chapters 3 through 5 we compare the different migration and settlement experiences of new Southeast Asian refugees and new Chinese immigrants. Each narrative chapter relies extensively on the ethnographies to convey as accurately and richly as possible representative stories of each group's experience. Each of the stories is told in the voice of individual interview subjects. The specific policy implications of the findings for each group are discussed at the end of the narrative chapters. In Chapter 7, entitled "Work, Welfare, and the New Immigration," we develop a five-point policy strategy addressing transnational migration in general, and recommend specific policy proposals for restructuring California's health, education, and welfare policies in order to enhance the socioeconomic and political integration of all five groups.

Chapter 2

CONTEMPORARY MEXICAN MIGRATION: THE INCREASING SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDER

The most significant change occurring in Mexican migration to the U.S. in the last 15 years is that more women are coming than ever before. Although women have migrated from Mexico with their families or to join their husbands in the U.S. since the late 1800s, they were always in the minority and comprised a subordinate pattern of migration. Since the mid-1970s, however, the influx of women has become the dominant pattern, overtaking the pattern established during the Bracero program of 1945-1964, of lone males in their 20s or 30s who were either single or left their families in Mexico while they worked in seasonal agriculture for six months and then returned to Mexico. The movement of whole families from Mexico has greatly accelerated, particularly in the last decade, with wives and children joining spouses in the U.S. and single women, especially in their 20s, coming to work (Cornelius 1989-90, 1990; Rouse, 1989; Bean et al., 1990; Bustamante, 1990).

The influx of women has had an important impact on the nature of Mexican migration, as well as on the settlement practices of Mexican immigrants. Throughout the 1970s, as women came to join their spouses or daughters to reunite with parents working in the U.S., a primary reason to return to Mexico — family reunification — has diminished sharply. Thus Mexican immigrants have been extending their stays in the U.S., shifting from temporary work trips to longer stays of years at a time, to "settling out" more or less permanently (Browning and Rodríquez, 1985; Massey, 1985; Rouse, 1989; Cornelius, 1989-90). This was true for even the most ambivalent sojourners we studied. Although approximately one-half of the Mexican respondents told us they planned to return to Mexico, they confided that it would not be until their children were grown or until their retirement.

As women and children have migrated to the U.S. and families have begun to flourish, Mexican settlement in the U.S. has become more visible. No longer hidden away in rural migrant labor camps, dormitory motels or even caves, vibrant urban-based Mexican enclaves with families working in services and light manufacturing have grown throughout California, like the ones found in our study in the Alkali Flat neighborhood, in the south area along Franklin Boulevard, and in the Northgate section of Sacramento. Enclaves like this form part of a transnational migrant circuit. Ironically, increased visibility of Mexican settlement occurs at a time of recessionary downturn, neighborhood disinvestment, and cutbacks and elimination of social services, fueling compassion fatigue and an increasingly hostile reception for newcomers.

As the Mexican migrant population shifts from single men to women and children coming for long stays or settling permanently, more social services are needed, especially

medical care for reproductive needs, day and health care for children, and improved bilingual education in concentrated areas of Mexican settlement. Providing services to help women and children adjust to their new environment should be viewed as an investment in the future of their productive contributions, and will require careful planning and prioritizing of limited resources by social service agencies.

Women and children thus are key actors in contemporary Mexican migration. To understand why Mexican women are migrating in greater numbers that ever before, we need to comprehend the stakes involved for them, especially in leaving their homes to travel sometimes thousands of miles to a foreign place, or in the case of undocumented women, risking a journey fraught with potential robbery and assault, often with a group of strangers and a coyote, only to be sent back if apprehended by a border patrol agent. Moreover, to shed light on their adjustment process, we need to understand what these newly arrived women have left behind and what they are coming to. What resources and "social capital" do they bring with them in the form of education, work experience, money, family support, and talent that influences their adjustment in the U.S.?

The majority of the Mexican women in our study are from rural backgrounds, representing the traditional "sending states" of Jalisco, Michoacán, Guanajuato, and Zacatecas. While several women originated from middle-size agricultural cities, the majority grew up in small towns or hamlets on small family farms which their fathers either owned or rented. Subsistence agriculture is the primary economic activity in these towns, along with some small commercial enterprises, petty commerce, and construction.

The urban dwellers in our study were from three states, Jalisco, Mexico, and the northern state of Chihuahua. Three women originated from Guadalajara, the highly urbanized capital of Jalisco, one was from an industrial area located an hour from the Federal District of Mexico, and one from a northern area in Chihuahua where export agriculture and maquiladoras predominate. Although the points of origin of several of the urban dwellers indicate that the recessionary crisis is facilitating migration from both urban centers and nontraditional sending areas, the majority of the people we interviewed were from traditional sending states of western Mexico, enabling the women to take advantage of the transnational circuits of people, information, and resources developed during the last 30 years of migration.

The majority of the Mexican women we interviewed, both rural and urban dwellers, worked in Mexico before migrating to the U.S. The former, in addition to helping on the family farm, worked in small businesses, such as selling shoes and movie tickets or doing piece-rate work such as sewing. One woman who grew up in a small town and worked on the family farm felt that it was more difficult for women than men to find jobs in her hamlet. Men had the possibility of finding construction work — "men's jobs," as she put it; the only jobs available for women, which her sisters and sister-in-law did, involved sewing blouses at piece rates. Only one rural woman we interviewed had earned wages as a fieldworker on a strawberry farm. Later, after moving to Mexicali with her husband, she cleaned apartments. Another woman obtained a job at a gas company in her small town, working as an administrative secretary and dispatcher — essentially the office manager, from the duties she described. We also interviewed a bookkeeper from a medium-size

agricultural city who held several jobs in her field after attending vocational school and completing a secretarial course.

All of the urban dwellers we interviewed were wage earners in Mexico before migrating to the California. One of the Guadalajara women worked in her brother's tortilleria, making only enough money per week to buy a tank of gas, until her brother's shop went bankrupt and she migrated. Her sister worked as secretary for six months before migrating to the U.S. at age 16. The only Mexican woman in our study with three years of university training held several white-collar jobs in Guadalajara, including a social worker position for a child and family agency and an insurance salesperson for a bank. One woman from a highly industrialized area an hour from the federal district, who had cleaned the labs in a chemical factory where her father worked and through whom she obtained the job, later became a fieldworker on both sides of a Mexico-Texas border city in search of higher wages. Only one woman we interviewed had worked in a maquiladora in a Mexican border city in Chihuahua.

The educational level of the women we interviewed ranged from no formal education to three years of university training. The majority had at least a primary school or sixth grade education. Six of the women had either a junior high school education or completed a secretarial course. One woman completed high school and one completed junior high school in the United States.

In recent years, Mexican women migrating to the U.S. have had some form of work experience, for the most part, from informal or piece-rate work to wage labor, as secretaries or selling small commodities. They also have had some education, generally at the grammar school level. They come with a great desire to work to improve their standard of living, migrating because there are jobs, which are often gender-typed and primarily low-skill, low-paying jobs with few benefits. Given their work skills, educational level, and lack of English-speaking ability, as well as their gender and ethnicity, these are the types of jobs available

BECOMING TRANSNATIONAL

Initially striking in the Mexican women's responses to questions about migration was their strong economic sense. Every woman interviewed was highly aware of the differences between her socioeconomic condition in Mexico and the U.S., regardless of her social background and the stability or precariousness of her current situation in California. Edit, who is 25 years old, recently separated from her husband, currently unemployed, and the sole support of her daughter, stated, "I like that even if you are poor, you are still better off here than in Mexico." Ramona, 34 years old, twice divorced, janitor in a large school and the sole support of her son, discussed the relativity of economic security: "I like the comfort. Here you have everything. Even if you were very poor in Mexico, here you live like the rich . . . You have your little apartment. It has its carpet . . . You have everything. You have good services and sometimes you have good neighbors . . . Here since you get paid by the hour you don't have to worry everyday about whether or not you will have enough money to get by tomorrow." Graciela, 28 years old, working in Sacramento

cleaning motel rooms while her husband and baby daughter live in a Mexico-Texas border city, describes the tradeoffs involved in seeking a higher standard of living in California:

> It is one thousand times better here than in Mexico . . . My siblings [however] now realize life here isn't easy. Several times I talked to them on the phone and told them life here was very hard, I told them it is true you eat well here and can make good money, but it isn't easy to get a job here. I told them it isn't like Mexico where you go to ask for work and they can give it to you right away. Here you have to show many papers, take tests . . . I told them I knew they were thinking to come here to see how nice everything was [and that] things here are not as they were thinking.

Another respondent, Rosa Maria, who is married, mother of two sons, and a hotel cleaner, viewed her situation in strictly relative terms. Although the standard of living is higher in California, so is the cost of living. She has incurred expenses she never dreamed of in Mexico, making it very difficult to advance economically. The deciding factor for Rosa Maria and her primary reason for coming to the U.S. was the possibility of obtaining a job, which she viewed as almost nonexistent in her small town in Jalisco:

> Here, it's different. Here, you have to think that even if you don't have a job, still you have a rent to pay. You have many bills . . . you pay for everything. Well, the way I lived there was different. For example, in my house we didn't have to pay electricity. We had light from kerosene. Well, we had to worry about buying kerosene. Here, it's different. There, we had an ugly little house, but we didn't have to pay rent to anyone. We didn't pay for water either because our water came from a well. We only needed money to buy some food. Here, you need money for everything. Well, there are jobs here. There aren't jobs there [in her hometown].

Several of our interviewees posed their thoughts and feelings about the necessity of migration and the differences between life in California and in Mexico as an economic versus emotional split: Although one's standard of living with regard to food and goods is higher in California, life is more stressful and less emotionally and interpersonally satisfying than in Mexico. As one woman put it, "Everything is better here, but I think people live more at ease there." Another revealed, "There life is peaceful and quiet. You sleep in peace . . . there we were poor, we ate meat once a month, but I don't know, I feel life is pretty there . . . Here it is different . . . Sometimes I wish I could see all of us from the skies. I think we would look like monkeys moving from place to place. There is so much pressure."

Making the decision to leave the familiarity of their homes in Mexico for the U.S. was often psychologically difficult for Mexican women. Although the women felt they were better off economically in California, they realized that they traded off valued aspects of their own culture, such as serenity and close interpersonal relations with relatives, friends, and even marital partners.

For the Mexican women we interviewed, economic need was an overriding factor in their decision to immigrate. After examining their accounts, however, it became obvious that the decision was influenced by many other factors, demonstrating the reciprocal

influence of social and economic concerns. Thus, the individual stories of the Mexican women in our study reflect new patterns of migration, shedding light on why migration continues to increase, unlike previous periods of economic downturn.

For example, Maria, who arrived in Sacramento 10 years ago with her 4-year-old daughter, is part of a new pattern of women coming on their own to the U.S. Maria grew up in the picturesque city of Ville de Santiago, an agricultural town in Guanajuato, as part of a relatively small family of three siblings. Her father was a taxi driver and homeowner who supported the entire family, "not like rich but comfortable." She and her siblings did not work outside the home until they were 18 and 19 years old because her father gave her and her siblings an education, which Maria related proudly. She completed primary school at the sixth grade and then a three-year vocational course, becoming a bookkeeper and clerk typist. She held a variety of jobs in Mexico, including working for the City Hall Office of the Treasurer, the municipal sports office, a clothing store, and a paper supply store. After deciding to come to the U.S., she left her hometown and traveled to Mexicali to arrange her and her daughter's passports. An uncle from Sacramento met her in Mexicali and accompanied her to Sacramento, where she has resided ever since. At first, Maria stated that she migrated to California primarily for economic reasons, to support herself and her daughter. She revealed, however, that being a divorced woman in Mexico compounded her economic situation, making her status intolerable. Leaving behind what she perceived to be an impossible situation, Maria decided to immigrate to the U.S. where she believed her social status would be more acceptable and would not impede her livelihood:

> [T]here, one doesn't earn enough money to support oneself . . . and also when one is divorced, society pushes one aside [so] I said to myself, "Well, I am not going to stay living here all the time, so that people can push me aside" . . . I went to ask for a job and they said, "No, because you are a divorced woman," and then I couldn't work in that job and I was pushed aside. And I don't like that people push me aside, and then I said to myself 'I will try to see whether I can go to the U.S. There, life is a lot more liberal . . . freer, and in Mexico I was pushed aside because I had a daughter and was divorced.

Thrice Migrant: Edit's Story

When Edit arrived in California in 1987 at age 21, she had already made two previous trips here, in 1983 and 1985. Her migrations represent and combine both old and new patterns. With three trips in four years, she was becoming a circular migrant; by her second trip to the U.S., she was coming alone. The third of 17 siblings, Edit grew up on a small farm where her father raised cattle in the growing city of Apatzingan, Michoacán, where agriculture is the primary economic activity. Initially, Edit's father rented the land, but later he purchased it and a home. While growing up, all of the children helped their father farm before several of them started to migrate to the United States. In addition to helping, Edit completed primary school and then started a secretarial course, but didn't finish it. After completing school, she worked as a ticket clerk in a movie theater. Upon returning from her second trip to the U.S., with financial help from her brother in the U.S. and other relatives, Edit opened a small jewelry and cosmetics shop with her mother. It failed in less

that a year, however, in part because of mismanagement, and in part because it was robbed of most of its stock during Edit's third trip to California. From Sacramento, Edit instructed her mother to close the shop and distribute the remaining jewelry to their relatives.

Edit's primary reason for migrating to the U.S. was economic, but as she told her story it became apparent that her decision is inextricably involved with important social and reputational concerns. On Edit's first trip in 1983, at age 17, she was accompanied by her cousin, a brother- and sister-in-law, and a child. Ostensibly coming to attend her uncle's wedding, she also wanted to work, and consequently remained in the U.S. for over a year in her brother's home in Los Angeles, surrounded by neighboring uncles and aunts. Except for babysitting, in which she had little interest after helping to raise so many of her siblings, she was unsuccessful in locating employment. Over the protests of her siblings in the U.S., Edit returned to Mexico. She returned to California shortly thereafter, in 1985, and this time found work harvesting olives and peaches. Later in the year, Edit met and began to work for a woman who had an informal house-cleaning business in Los Angeles, and cleaned houses for the remainder of her two-year stay in the U.S. In 1987, she returned to Mexico and opened the jewelry and cosmetics business.

In 1988 Edit returned to the U.S. for the third time, this time going to Sacramento where her oldest brother, grandmother, and several uncles and aunts reside. Edit confided that she did not get along with her brother's wife in Los Angeles, and decided to stay with her brother in Sacramento, who "has always been good to us." At the same time, however, she remarked that "his wife isn't always nice." On this trip, Edit met the man she would marry and with whom she would have a daughter.

Edit's decision to migrate to the U.S. for the third time, leaving a business she had recently opened, was economically and politically motivated. On the third trip, Edit planned to work in the U.S. again to invest her earnings in her business in Mexico. She also thought she would try to obtain legal residency in the U.S. during this trip, a time-limited opportunity accorded by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986. It was not until Edit began to discuss her current marital problems, however, that she revealed a more pressing and painful reason for leaving Mexico: while in Mexico she had become involved with a married man, became pregnant, and then decided to have an abortion after realizing the hopelessness of a future with him. Telling no one in her family, she faced her decision alone. Later, however, her mother and a brother found out when she became seriously ill and required hospital care for an infection resulting from the abortion. Her mother and brother decided that Edit should not tell anyone else in the family about her situation, but instead supported her decision to come to the U.S.:

> That's why I left Mexico. I fell in love with a married man. I loved him very much, but there wasn't any point in staying in that relationship. That's why I decided to leave everything behind and come here.
>
> *Do you think your relationship with that guy had anything to do with the failure of your business?*
>
> I think so. I was very foolish. I felt I loved him so much that everything he did to me affected the way I dealt with the business. My mother put the business in my hands because she trusted me. I had been the kind of person who could pay

attention to things — I used to concentrate on what I did. I blamed that relationship for everything.

Did your family know about that relationship?

At the beginning they didn't. Well, my father never knew about it. My mother realized what was going on late in the relationship.

What was your mother's reaction?

She said she didn't want me to be involved with him. That's why she agreed with my decision to come here. She thought it was the best for me.

Thus, Edit's decision to come to the U.S. for apparently economic reasons actually was more complicated in nature, resulting in a change of life plans. Having no intention of staying in California for an extended length of time, Edit found herself here indefinitely because of her and her family's reputational concerns associated with being unmarried, pregnant, and having an abortion in a traditional culture. Recently separated from her husband, Edit's future plans to remain in California or return to Mexico now are contingent not only upon the reputational concerns of her family of origin, but the welfare of her daughter of whom she is the primary support:

To tell you the truth, I don't like the U.S. I wouldn't like to live here the rest of my life. Well, now I might stay because of my daughter. I haven't been in Mexico in 2½ years. When my mother was here, she complained about how bad things are there [in Mexico]. Prices have gone up — you can't make ends meet there. So, I have to think about my daughter. If I go back there with my daughter, what would I do? This time I feel I'm getting used to living here. The first time I was here, I had a difficult time. I spent all that time complaining and saying I wanted to go back to Mexico. I was never at ease that first time.

In addition to illustrating the complexity of her motivations to migrate, Edit's journeys also point to both the strengths of and strains on family networks in the migration process. Having siblings in the U.S. enabled Edit to make the journey in the first place, providing a destination and a place to stay, as well as cushioning the daily difficulties of adjustment. Moreover, her oldest brother's assistance in the form of remittances enabled Edit to start a business in Mexico, and also helped her father eventually purchase a home and the land he farms. Yet the conflict Edit experienced, first with her brother's wife in Los Angeles, causing her to switch destinations, as well as the chilly reception of her oldest brother's wife in Sacramento, brought on by the wife's resentment toward her husband's years of assistance to his family of origin, point to the difficulties experienced by individuals who migrate. These difficulties entail not only determining the responsibility toward one's chosen family and members of one's family of origin, but in constructing and determining the actual boundaries of these families, whose members reside on either side of the border.

Borderless Youth: Norma's Emergent Transnational Identity

Norma's story presents yet another picture of why young women as well as young men come to the U.S., combining both old and new patterns of migration. At 14, Norma decided to strike out on her own and come to the U.S., a relatively new trend in female migration. Born and raised in a tiny hamlet in Zacatecas, Mexico, Norma had spent her 14 years with her six siblings helping her father farm the 35 hectares of land he had inherited from his uncle, growing maize, beans, chili, tomatoes, and pumpkins. A perceptive and extremely independent young woman, Norma saw few opportunities for advancement at home and turned her sights to the U.S. Her parents, who at first objected to her decision to migrate, finally conceded and said she could do what she thought was best for her. An aunt who had lived in Texas for many years then invited Norma to come to the U.S., promising to help her find work. Norma left with her aunt and had an uncharacteristically easy journey because of their familiarity with the coyotes, a relatively simple terrain at the crossing point, and a bargain-basement fee charged by the coyotes:

> We [she and her aunt] were very lucky. Well, we knew some persons and they helped us cross the border. We had to pay them, but they treated us very well. We always felt safe with them . . . They knew us by name. . . . There are many people from my hamlet in Texas. Sometimes we all got together to cross [the border] together. We were on friendly terms with the guys who took us across [the border].
>
> *How much did the guys charge you?*
>
> It wasn't much. At the beginning they charged us only a dollar. But later on, they began charging us two dollars. Still, it wasn't much. Well, it wasn't a lot of work to help us cross the stream. All we had to do was to cross a little stream. The stream didn't carry much water. We just didn't want to get wet, so the guys took us across.

Once in Texas, as promised, Norma's aunt put her in contact with a woman who needed a babysitter for her children and a housecleaner. The señora, as Norma described, who had married an American citizen from Texas, originally was from her hometown. Although they were not personally acquainted, they were connected by place. Norma moved in with the family, working as their babysitter and housecleaner until the children no longer needed supervision, at which time she primarily cleaned houses. Norma also became a circular migrant, returning each year to Mexico in June and December to visit her family, staying for up to two months at a time before returning to Texas. Although Norma's adjustment to U.S. society was cushioned and in many ways sheltered by her aunt's assistance and by the familiarity and safety of the hometown señora's household, the transition to urban life in a new land was nonetheless frightening and often perplexing for this 14-year-old from a rural hamlet of 500:

> I kept wondering about how things were here. So, I had doubts about leaving . . . I was also afraid. I knew I would be leaving a small hamlet to go to live in a big city. At first, many things amazed me. I kept wondering why so many people were walking on the streets. I had to get used to many things . . . There

were so many things I had never imagined. I mean, I saw things that had never occurred to me they could exist.

So, you had never been in a city before you left Mexico.

Never.

I can see why you were almost in shock.

It was a big surprise.

Sort of like going to another planet.

Yes. My aunt had told me things here were very different from home. She told me houses have carpets . . . I have never seen many of the things she mentioned. At home, we didn't have a phone. We didn't even have TV. So, I didn't have an idea what many things were for. The first time I turned on the vacuum cleaner it gave me a big scare. I had never heard such a noise.

After five years in Texas, and becoming a bit bored, Norma turned her sights toward moving again, this time to California, after receiving numerous invitations from cousins in Pittsburg, an urban community in northern California. Although the señora she worked for had told her she could stay on "as part of the family," even though her babysitting services were no longer required, Norma confided that she did not feel comfortable with the arrangement, thoughtfully analyzing what was at bottom an economic relationship:

The children grew up and didn't need me anymore. So, the señora told me that if I wanted, I could look for another job. She said I was welcome to stay in their house. They always tell me I'm like another member of the family, but I know I'm not. I mean, my situation is different. Well, the children see me as a sort of sister. I get phone calls from this family and letters. I also call and write them. We stay in touch as if we were really related, but of course, we aren't . . . They made me feel good, but I knew I wasn't one of them. . . . They never charged me for staying there after I was no longer babysitting their children, but again, I couldn't feel as if I were part of the family . . .

Deciding to leave the security of her position in Texas, Norma flew to Pittsburg, California with her cousin. Taking up residence in her cousin's home, she located another babysitting job in nearby Walnut Creek. Norma's fiancee, a Mexican American whom she had been dating in Texas, agreed to follow Norma to California and seek employment in Sacramento, where some of his uncles resided. Deciding to hold their wedding in Mexico, Norma returned to her hamlet for two months to plan the event. After the wedding in Zacatecas she and her husband returned together to Sacramento, where they now reside.

Currently Norma is unemployed, as her husband prefers that she doesn't work outside the home. As he earns $15 per hour in construction, he feels he can support the two of them. One of the reasons he married Norma, she related, was "to give me a better life — not to see me working so hard again." Moreover, Norma's husband wants to have a baby immediately while Norma remains ambivalent, wishing to wait until they are more financially secure. Not surprisingly, this young woman who has supported herself since she was 14, wants to work and learn English, both for herself and her spouse. She confided:

> Sometimes I get desperate at home. I would like to know more about so many things. My husband often gets home late and isn't in the mood to talk about these things. Lately, he has been working during the weekends too. I would like to help him in some way. I would like to be active learning about things. But I'm at home all the time.

As Norma's story shows, her decision to come to the U.S. was based primarily on economic concerns, along with a strong sense of curiosity. That immigration was even a possibility was facilitated by her family's experience (her father had been a bracero), and of course by the direct assistance of her aunt. The precipitating event, however, which allowed and in some sense necessitated migration, was Norma's quitting school after sixth grade. The need to pay fees and purchase books for secondary and preparatory school in Mexico, while not exorbitant, make a high school education financially prohibitive for the children of many low-income families. In many rural areas, moreover, the junior high and high school are located some distance away, requiring the additional cost of transportation. As it was no longer financially possible for Norma's father to continue the education of all of his children, Norma "volunteered" to leave school, a decision which she now regrets:

> [A]t home we are all one year apart. When it was time for me to go to secondary school, it would be three of us in secondary school. My father told us he could only afford to send two of us to school. And since I didn't feel I was very smart, I decided to let my sister go to school in my place. . . . After that, I came here to work. I liked to make money very much, so the need to go back to school was never a concern. Now, I think I was a fool. I let opportunities pass by me. . . . Since I wasn't in school, it was easy for me to decide to come here . . .

Ironically, the sister to whom Norma gave her place at school eventually followed in Norma's footsteps. Lured by the prospect of making money in the U.S., she dropped out of a specialized course in Mexico to seek work in Texas. As if to reinforce the evaluation of her own experience, Norma disclosed that her sister now regrets her decision:

> [My sister] is the one who went to secondary school. After she finished secondary school, she took a specific course and was about to complete it when she dropped out. She didn't want to study anymore. She had the opportunity to continue her studies, but she didn't take advantage of it. She saw I was working and making money here. She told me she thought I was doing well. I was earning money and with the money I was earning, I had been able to buy many things for myself and still had money left to send home. So, she thought she could do the same. Now that she really knows what it's like [here], she regrets she didn't complete her course.

Once young people in Mexico leave school, their options are limited in several ways. As several women explained, they become disqualified for any type of factory work — which requires at least a junior high and sometimes a high school education — and thus higher wages. The competition for these jobs is also extremely fierce, given Mexico's uneven development, which has been exacerbated by the recessionary crisis since 1982. The remaining jobs for which someone with a sixth grade education qualifies are usually low-paying selling and serving jobs in small businesses such as a tortilleria, and informal

and/or piece-rate work such as cleaning houses, babysitting, and sewing, where, as one woman told us, "You aren't even asked to show proof you finished secondary or preparatory school." Moreover, in rural hamlets such as Norma's, often these are the only wage-labor jobs available, if at all, besides agricultural work. Thus, once the decision is made to leave school, because of the financial difficulty of continuing education for many Mexican youth, the avenue "to better oneself," as Norma puts it, becomes migrating to the U.S.

Motivations for female migration from Mexico are complex, but the common thread running through the stories of the women we studied is economic need, often exacerbated by social factors, such as divorce, reputational concerns, and blocked educational attainment. Mexico's economic crisis of the 1980s, estimated to have reduced the real wages of the majority of Mexicans by 40-50 percent, has driven more women into the work force to support themselves and/or their families (Cornelius, 1989-90: 7, 17). In particular, large urban centers filled with government workers have been disproportionately affected by the recessionary crisis, as government austerity programs have reduced employment and wages circulating through the economy (Escobar, Gonzalez and Roberts, 1987; Cornelius, 1989-90: 9). Increasingly, these large urban centers with saturated labor markets can no longer support the internal migration of rural dwellers seeking employment. The next stop for many women and men looking for jobs is the U.S.

WORK AND FAMILY TRANSFORMATION

For the majority of female migrants in our study, day-to-day settlement and survival was difficult, if not a struggle. Even for those surviving economically, the jobs available to them were secondary-sector service jobs characterized by low pay, low skills, with little or no security or possibility of future advancement. Only one woman had health insurance as a school janitor; one woman previously had health insurance and union coverage as a hotel cleaner. Many who have become longer-term settlers (here for 10 years or more) find it difficult to advance, as well. For example, when asked about perceived opportunities to increase her income and standard of living, one of our longest-term settlers — who works part-time and whose husband works full-time, but only in seasonal work — replied that her family's income would only improve when her children were grown, obtained jobs, and began to contribute to the family's income.

When we conducted our interviews, half of the married women were employed, and the majority of the married women who were unemployed had worked in the past. All but three of the single and divorced women were employed; of the unemployed, one woman was collecting unemployment, one was being supported by her roommates, and another, who was single and pregnant and had arrived very recently, was living with relatives.

The jobs held by the women we studied fall into four categories: informal babysitting and housecleaning work; hotel cleaning; janitorial work in office buildings or schools; and restaurant work in tortillerias. Only one woman worked in a local cannery on a part-time, seasonal basis. Two women had worked in the fields when they first arrived, one for only six days. One woman who was currently unemployed and had previously done babysitting

and janitorial work in Sacramento, had several factory jobs in Los Angeles before migrating to Sacramento, one in plastics and one in fabrics, dying material.

Many of the service jobs available are located either in Spanish-speaking, Latino enclaves where recently arrived Mexican immigrants seek employment through relatives or friends and — perhaps more significantly, where longer-term settlers remain employed — or are jobs that are becoming "Latinoized," increasingly held by Spanish-speaking migrants. This became evident when we questioned the women about their coworkers. The overwhelming majority had primarily Spanish-speaking coworkers, not only in enclave-type jobs such as Mexican restaurants, but also in janitorial work and hotel cleaning, where there was also a recent influx of non-English-speaking Asian immigrants and refugees. Only two women had English-speaking coworkers who were quite willing to teach them, and they took advantage of the opportunity to learn some English on the job.

The following two stories illustrate both the resourcefulness and difficulties entailed in the survival and settlement experiences of migrant Mexican women and their families. These stories speak to the women's resiliency, enormous working capacity, and courage in trying to make a living in low-paying, often strenuous jobs to provide for themselves and their families. One story is about a woman who is desperately trying to improve the quality of her jobs and her family's standard of living by making the most of Latino enclave-type jobs and training programs to move into jobs with more mobility, meaning, and security. The second is typical of a woman who feels trapped by her circumstances of being unable to speak English and blocked job mobility; and, adding to her precarious economic situation, she is experiencing difficulty in her marriage.

We have chosen to highlight the women's work experiences because work is so crucial to their survival and advancement in the U.S. and often the primary reason they migrate, with or without their families. Their work lives, nonetheless, are enacted within their families and sets of familial relations and cultural traditions. Family and familial relations, in addition to giving central meaning to the women's lives, are crucial in providing support and resources available for their survival. Yet these familial relations also entail important but often less-noted arenas of conflict, strains, and overload. These familial relations continually need to be worked out, their boundaries and terrains constructed and reconstructed as they both shape and are shaped by the women's precarious working lives and transnational migrant experiences.

Work, Mobility and the Renegotiation of Family Life: Maria's Story

Upon arriving in Sacramento in 1981, Maria and her 4-year-old daughter from her first marriage in Mexico lived with her uncle and aunt for two years, cleaning their house and taking care of her aunt in return for room, board, and some spending money. Shortly thereafter, Maria began looking for employment. Her first job, which she obtained through a friend, was taking care of an elderly woman for five months, cleaning her house and preparing meals. At the same time, she began taking ESL classes at a local school whose program is funded by the county, went on to take high school classes, and received her diploma.

During this time, Maria met her second husband, married, and left her job when she became pregnant with a second child. After the birth of her daughter, Maria again began to look for employment and, through another contact, a teacher she had met at school, began working for the owner of a beauty salon, keeping her books for $2 an hour in 1982, as well as cleaning the owner's shop and apartment. As Maria is an enormously hard worker, it is not surprising that her employers have always considered her an excellent employee. Nevertheless, after working for the beauty shop for some time, she felt she could find a job that paid higher wages.

Maria's next job came about through the U.S. government's amnesty program, bringing her into a world that she thoroughly enjoys and finds meaningful: community service. Seeking amnesty in 1987 through the Immigration Reform and Control Act, Maria went to a local social service agency that subcontracted with the federal government to legalize qualifying undocumented migrants. The cost of completing the paperwork for legalization for her and her Mexican-born daughter was $125. As Maria put it, "I was very poor then and didn't have any papers. . . . I was sick and pregnant" (with her third daughter). The amnesty program coordinator completed Maria's and her daughter's paperwork without charge and in return Maria became a volunteer worker at the agency, translating for fellow migrants seeking legalization. After a month of volunteer work, the coordinator offered Maria a job as an administrative assistant.

Maria's description of her employment history reveals, in addition to an extensive reliance on contacts for finding work, her continual search for jobs that pay higher wages in the worlds of both temporary informal and formal employment:

> Well, the job at the beauty salon, I left it because I was looking for more money and [left the job] with the lady because I got married and because I had the girls. This lady still holds me in high esteem and I still work for her granddaughters. Once in awhile I [still] clean houses . . . She [the old lady] says she trusts me a lot because you know . . . there are persons who like to steal things and these ladies are very rich, they have jewelry. So, she trusts me a lot . . . they leave me in their houses by myself, big houses. . . . I left that job because I got married and had my daughters. And the one at the project? Because I was looking for another job in which I earned more money.

Maria's current job, of which she is very proud, is working as coordinator for a mobile health clinic that provides basic medical care for low-income and poor children in neighborhoods throughout Sacramento County. The mobile program is provided by Medi-Cal funding under the California Child Health and Disability Prevention program, but the children do not have to be eligible for Medi-Cal coverage to receive health services. Maria travels with a doctor and his assistant and does all the intake interviewing, obtaining information about the children's health history, the parents' income, etc.

When questioned about her working conditions, Maria said they were quite good, citing a flexible schedule and working as many hours as she would like. A typical day often begins at 3:30 in the afternoon and ends at 10:30 at night, because "that's the time persons are at home with their children." She is paid bimonthly at an hourly wage that was recently raised from $5.00 to $6.25 an hour, and typically earns about $650 per month. She also receives occasional bonuses.

Maria's skills have proved invaluable to the clinic, not only because she speaks Spanish, is personable, and considerate of clients' needs, especially when discussing sensitive topics like their income, but because of her ability to perform outreach work. Drawing on her knowledge of Spanish-speaking neighborhoods in downtown Sacramento, she uses her experience of contacts and networks to become a networker herself to attract clients to the clinic:

> I have a friend and because of friends I found about areas where Mexicans live. And then, I go to these places and ask for the apartment manager. I [find] the manager. . . . I go and explain to her my program and then I [ask] her if she gives me permission to place the mobile clinic . . . but first I have to find out about places where people speak Spanish. . . . Also I write notices and they call me at my home. . . .

Maria's love of her job is reflected in her enthusiasm about her work, her self-esteem, and in her feelings about her coworkers and their reciprocal feelings of respect:

> I like everything [about the job] because I like to help the community and my boss is very good, that is, he is fair. . . . He is American and I talk to him and he holds me in high esteem . . . and now that I began working for him he already gave me a raise. He says I am the coordinator that has brought the largest number of persons [patients] because I tell him [that I will bring] 25 children and they are 28 [bringing more than expected]. And in the other communities with the other coordinators nobody came [to the clinic] but I work daily and I talk to people. . . . I thank God a lot for finding this job where I feel free . . . I feel I am excelling, I feel useful.

When asked how she obtained the job, her response was not surprising: "I found it through a friend. Since she recommended me, through her, it was her recommendation and I haven't disappointed her."

Maria's success on the job and in locating stimulating work through hard work, self-development and ingenuity, while inspiring, should not be interpreted to mean that life is economically secure or easy for her and her family. She and her husband's combined income to support a family of five is $1,400 per month. Moreover, the rent on their government-subsidized, low-income apartment in the downtown Alkali Flat neighborhood has recently doubled because their combined income now disqualifies them for a higher rent subsidy. In addition, since Maria has arrived in the U.S. she has used the California Medical Indigent Services (CMIS) program for her health care and Medi-Cal coverage for her daughters. Particularly detrimental is the loss of Medi-Cal benefits for her daughters as Maria's income gradually increases:

> Now they [the government] are going to put an end to my Medi-Cal . . . after [earning more than] $100 they [Medi-Cal] have a table and after $100 I have to pay . . . $158 per month. . . . that's not a lot but when one goes to see a doctor and I have a girl who suffers from asthma . . . I have to see a doctor constantly. [The $158 is the flat rate. Once the patient sees a doctor there are extra charges.] . . . it doesn't make much sense and I need it . . . so I always have to be in a job that doesn't pay me more than $1,000 per month [to qualify for some assistance]

. . . then I will not be able to support myself because my daughters are growing up and they're going to need more things because they are growing more. . . . My daughters' clothes . . . a skirt costs $35, a pair of pants $35 . . . then how many hours would I have to work? If they put an end to my Medi-Cal, then I would not be able to take care of the one that has asthma and the medicine for her asthma is very expensive.

The lack of health care specifically and social services generally for Maria and her family is typical of the experience of both undocumented and documented migrants. The only health services available for undocumented female migrants are Medi-Cal for prenatal and birth care as well as emergencies, and Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) program food supplements for mothers and U.S.-born babies, who are also eligible for Medi-Cal coverage, the amount depending upon parent(s') income. CMIS is the only other program available to undocumented people.

In discussing the type of social services needed by new immigrants, Maria cites her own experiences and the need for outreach informing new immigrants of their eligibility for and the requirements, responsibilities, and benefits of existing programs:

Many people need [affordable] housing, they need programs like this one from HUD. Many persons need it because they can hardly make enough money. They also need medical assistance . . . this is most important because often they don't go to see a doctor because they don't have money to pay a doctor . . . they don't have money to pay for the medicines and they don't know about these programs. [They don't know] that the government is helping and it is necessary that they have [access to] all these things. I became aware [of these programs] when I took my daughter to [the hospital] emergency and I was looking into these programs. Through UC Davis [Medical Center] I went there to the emergency [room] with my daughter and I was told to see somebody there [who explained]. . . . But to those who don't know [about these programs] I explain these to them so they are not as [ignorant] as I was when I came here.

At the next level of service provision, Maria articulated the difficulties associated with new immigrants' lack of familiarity with bureaucratic procedure and lack of communication between Spanish-speaking immigrants and both Anglo and non-Anglo monolingual social service providers, and recommended employment of additional bilingual providers:

Well, my experience . . . once a social worker . . . they don't treat you well, they treat you badly. . . . [O]ne wants to explain things to them, "see this or see that, this or that happened to me," and they just [ask] "Your social security? When did you come here? Do you have any papers [documents]?" So, they don't explain things to you. That happened to me, once I wasn't treated well but . . . now when they don't treat me well I fight back. Before, I didn't fight back because I didn't know the language. Now I do. I answer back with my broken English to anything they tell me. And I say why this or that or why there is so much injustice? Precisely here, in this clinic [in Sacramento], there is a lot of injustice toward Mexican people. . . . I have been there and they don't treat us well. There is nobody who speaks Spanish. There are Chinese and . . . about a month ago, I

went to that clinic and the [woman] treated me very bad because I told her I couldn't make my appointment and wanted to change it for another day. And she said, I can't [do it]. Then I told her, "Well, can I talk to the doctor?" And we had a problem and she said "Well, I don't understand you because you speak . . ." and I told her I am speaking English, I am not talking to you in Spanish. So, we had a problem but I defend myself. . . . There isn't anyone who speaks Spanish, hire persons who speak Spanish so these persons [the immigrants] can get helped and the programs can be explained to them. Some persons [service providers] just tell you sign here and there without explaining you anything . . . [such as] if you don't have any money you don't have to pay [for the service], if you have money you have to pay a certain portion of the money you make . . . so they [the immigrants] need to get information about the program. . . . Many persons don't understand what they are doing. They just sign and that's it.

Maria's articulated positions, her employment and engagement in community service, her striving for self-improvement and the well-being of her family, has been met with mixed responses on the part of her husband. On the one hand, he and Maria both contribute to household expenses and to a large extent share in decision-making about how money is to be spent. He also assists with household chores and childcare on the weekends:

My husband and I [both] work and money . . . for example, I earn my pay and now it is my turn to pay the rent, the electricity, the phone . . . until my money runs out and then he brings food, he pays the car insurance and if the cars break down . . . that's the way things are . . . and he keeps little money for himself and I keep little money for myself. Sometimes we are short of money . . . A necessity is to pay the rent, the place where one lives and the phone is also indispensable, food is also very important. We like to eat well and to feed the girls very well . . . and then clothes, but that is less important.

Who decides how money is spent in your family? You said a moment ago that you more or less decided that you will pay the rent, your husband . . .

Between the two of us because it would not be [purchased with] just my income, but also with his. . . . There are times when I decide things on my own like when I say to him, "We need this or that, the girls . . . I am going to buy something for them" and he says "That's fine" . . . but there are times I do not ask for his permission . . . it depends on the situation.

In terms of housework, how are the different tasks divided among the members of the family? You have a 13-year-old daughter and two young girls . . . Who takes care of the two girls in the weekends, who does the cooking, the laundry, the cleaning of the house?

My husband is in charge of buying the food. He is the one who goes to the store. . . . I just give him a list with the things I need, I prepare lunch, dinner and supper and my daughter, the eldest one, does the dishes, cleans the bathroom, vacuums . . . we divide the chores. My daughter washes her clothes and irons them and I wash my husband's clothes, my own and those of the girls. Precisely today my eldest daughter began helping me with the ironing of the girls' clothes.

But my husband in the house . . . he repairs things when they break down but he doesn't do any cleaning. . . . Once in a while, when I am ill he does everything.

And what about babysitting the girls during the weekend?

Between the two. He takes care of them. I tell him, "I will go to the stores with my mother-in-law," his mother and I leave the girls with him for about 6 or 7 hours. . . . He takes very good care of them. The girls obey him more than they obey me.

At the same time, Maria's husband does not want her to work, preferring that she stay at home with their daughters. In fact, Maria disclosed that her husband blames her employment for the cut in their rent subsidy, arguing that if she stayed home as he wished they could save money. Given the government's practice of decreasing social benefits for minimal increases in income, Maria confided that her family would be better off economically if she quit her job. For Maria, meaningful work and increased but fragile independence has come at the cost of increasing conflict with her husband and traditional cultural attitudes:

[I]n Mexico men treat us as if we were slaves . . . as maids . . . and here, well my husband has many customs from Mexico. . . . He is Mexican but I don't let anyone treat me the same way I was treated the first time. I tell him [her present husband], "Women have the right to be almost as equal as men, they almost have the same rights, they feel the same," and I am always arguing with my husband because I tell him that we have the same rights. But then, he has his own ideas. But I try to make him see things differently . . . he doesn't like that a woman yells or that she betters herself, he doesn't like that one yells. Well, but my husband is good with me, but yes, it is different from Mexico. There, in Mexico one is treated like a maid and one doesn't have the right to speak out.

Workplace Discrimination, Interethnic Conflict, and the Language Trap: Rosa's Story

When Rosa was asked whether she had any second thoughts about leaving Mexico, she laughed and replied, "Yes, many. But love is stronger than everything." Rosa migrated to the U.S. to join her husband, a circular migrant who has worked seasonally in the U.S. since the early 1960s. A week after their marriage in Mexico, Rosa's husband returned to the U.S. to work. As she recounted, "How could I be married and be in Mexico while my husband was here? . . . I thought, How come he is leaving me behind? I'm not staying here. I'm going there." At first her husband objected, telling her that she had never been outside her small town, but Rosa was determined. Leaving her hamlet of 500 in Jalisco, where she had never worked except to help out on the family farm, Rosa embarked on what was to be a very difficult journey, that would typify her struggle to survive in the U.S.:

Once I was in the U.S., I was sure I could find him. All I had to do was to ask [for directions]. If you ask questions, soon you realize all roads lead to Rome. Still, he didn't want me to come. I decided to come anyway. But once I got to Tijuana, I got really scared. There were so many people telling me they could take

me across the border for so much money. I had never seen anything like that. I was very afraid. I met a man, a coyote, who told me he would take me across the border for so much money. This couple I came with from my hometown were going to cross the border with this coyote. But then, the coyote said he would only take me and the lady. He said the lady's husband couldn't come with us. That's when I told him, "Either you take the three of us or there is no deal." After that, he only wanted to cross me. I said, "No way." So, we didn't come with this coyote. Thereafter, a lady [coyote] said she could cross us. She said she would do it. She asked us to meet her at a little restaurant. Once she passed us across the border, she left us in the hills with a man. I was very scared. You can never tell [what can happen to you].

Did they take you to your sister's house [in L.A.]?

Yes. That ride was very nasty. There were many of us in a van. We were squeezed hard against each other. They arranged us like cigars. I was upset. I told them, "You don't care about us. All you want is money." We were about 20 [persons in the van] — well, I'm not sure [about the number], but there were many of us. And each was charged $450. They [the smugglers] didn't care. They were comfortable and happy. One was driving and the other was comfortably sitting next to the one doing the driving. We were only three women [in the van]. It was so ugly. Some of their [the men's] feet were . . . Oh, I don't want to remember.

. . . I was so upset [about the conditions]. We were only three women and the rest were men. We were aligned in a way in which our mouths touch other people's feet. . . . I arrived so tired to the hills [in the Mexico-U.S. border]. We had to run a lot. And they [the coyotes] kept telling us, "Don't move. Don't talk. Don't make any noise." And when we got to L.A., every time the van made a turn, I felt very dizzy. I even wanted to vomit. I was so tired. I had stomach ache. It was very ugly. Then . . . that happened in San Diego. Some young men — about 4 or 5 — were put in the trunk. I couldn't breathe at the thought of imagining them in the trunk. I told them [the coyotes], "You can't do that." They said, "Lady, do you want to get to the U.S.? If so, be quiet and bear this." After that I didn't say anything else. And these poor guys were put in the trunk. . . . [O]ne wanted to come to the U.S., but that doesn't mean one had to put up with all this. I guess I should be thankful they [the coyotes] didn't do anything worse to me. . . . There was a point we [the three women] didn't pay attention to see if [the person next to them] was a female or a male. I told myself, I'm not going through this again. I told my husband about this and he said, "Well, you wanted to come here. Now you know what it's like."

Since arriving in California, Rosa has held a series of jobs as a hotel maid. Her first job, however, which her husband located, was in the fields. Disliking the work and feeling very ill-treated, she lasted for six days. Shortly afterwards a friend called to tell her there were openings for maids at the Holiday Inn, one of several hotels in the downtown area in fairly close proximity to her Alkali Flat neighborhood. Rosa filled out a job application and

was asked for her social security card. Being undocumented and without a card, she told her supervisor that she left it at home and got the job. Shortly after she began working, U.S. immigration officials swept the hotel, apprehending several of Rosa's coworkers. As it happened, Rosa had the day off:

> So, I got the job. Soon after, the people from immigration came to the hotel. I was lucky. I wasn't working that day. The people from the migra [i.e., the INS's nickname among Mexicans and Central Americans], they took a friend of mine. They handcuffed her. I felt so pity for her. . . . They took about four women and I don't know how many men. They also took men with them.

Rosa returned to work and, she recounts, no one at the hotel mentioned the incident. She continued working there until she had her second child, taking some time off because she had no one to look after her sons. When another friend told her that the Hilton was hiring maids she quickly applied, as she needed to return to work as soon as possible. She got the job, earning $5.00 an hour for the three years she worked there, taking home approximately $500 per month.

Rosa's current job is at the Hyatt, which she obtained through another friend. Since hotel cleaning is highly variable, depending on business and the season, Rosa does not have a fixed schedule. Generally she works eight hours a day, five to six days a week when it is busy and three to four days a week when it is slow. She started at $4.85 per hour and her salary was raised to $5.10 per hour after five months, giving her an average take-home pay of $600 per month.

Although her work is tedious and often backbreaking, Rosa takes pride in her ability and in her initiative and consideration for the clientele:

> I like to work. I wish I could speak English to let [the hotel administrators] know I save them money. There are times there isn't any shampoo in the hotel and do you know what I do? I take the left overs to fill bottles as if they were new. I do this so that the people that come to the hotel leave very satisfied [about the service]. I am always trying to do my best. I know people there that don't do that. They only care about getting their paycheck. I'm not that way. Once I told an American that used to work there — she spoke a little bit of Spanish — I told her, "You get a paycheck here, but you should work to get that money." But I see [the administrators] don't take notice of the good things you do.

In addition to feeling that her work is undervalued, Rosa has experienced several other serious problems on the job. One is discrimination at the hands of Anglo supervisors, the other is conflict with non-Anglo coworkers. As a secondary service-sector job, hotel cleaning is low-paying with few benefits, no security, and little room for advancement. Although English speaking ability is preferred, it is not necessary for performing the work but essential for advancement. Thus in Sacramento, as well as elsewhere, it has become a job performed primarily by non-English-speaking immigrants and native-born minorities. Hotel cleaning was generally held by Latinos until the recent influx of Southeast Asian refugees and Asian immigrants. Now the job is shared by Latinos and Asians, neither of whom are English-speaking nor familiar with each other's culture. Competition for even these low-paying jobs and the few perquisites that accompany them is strong, with conflict

erupting between minority groups for even subminimum-wage work. More generally, worker and management disputes over pay and working conditions tend to shift from vertical to horizontal conflict between ethnic groups and coworkers, providing management with a powerful tool for acquiring and disciplining the workers who make up the local labor markets.

Conflict between Rosa and some of her Asian coworkers is exacerbated by their inability to speak English or each other's language. Rosa feels that her Anglo supervisors display favoritism toward the Asians. Whether managers consciously deploy favoritism or unconsciously enact it, the result is increased interethnic hostility between workers who feel pitted against one another:

> *Yesterday, you said something about discrimination in your workplace. You said that Asian workers or workers of Asian descent are treated better than Hispanics.*
>
> They don't clean the rooms well. I shouldn't say all of them. . . . There are some that do their job well, but there are others that don't. What happens is that in this hotel we get extra rooms. If you have time to [clean] these rooms, you get more money. Well, what some of them do — I don't know if they are Vietnamese or where they are from — is to hide all the dust underneath the bed. You lift the blankets and you can see all the dust. Why can't they clean things right? I feel I must clean the rooms well, so I never have time to do extra rooms and I don't make extra money. I think supervisors don't check the work you do. I work hard and they don't take notice. My back hurts for trying to do things right. But these other women don't [do their work right]. Sometimes I think they even laugh at you. I ask myself, why don't they [administrators] see that? Why don't they tell the others [i.e., some of the Asian women] to do their job a little bit better?
>
> Now, we get along. But still it bothers me that they don't do their job right. Yet, they always get the prizes. There is a $50 prize for the one who does the best room cleaning. And they always get the prize. Why doesn't anyone take a look at the way they clean the rooms? Go and see by yourselves. Well, I work on a special floor. There is a special floor there. I believe that's where the richest people stay. I tell to my fellow workers — to those that speak Spanish because I don't speak English — I have told them I don't know why [the administrators] assign me to the special floor when they know I don't speak English. The prize is supposed to be for the best maids — those that clean rooms very well. I know that to be assigned to that special floor you have to be very good at cleaning. But I never get the prize. If they [the Asian women] are the best, why aren't they assigned to floor 10? If they are the best, they should be assigned to the special floor. Sometimes I wonder if they think I'm stupid.

Rosa's most serious problem on the job, thus far, has been with a supervisor at her previous job. Finding some old clothes left behind in a hotel room, Rosa was on her way to return them to the main office when her supervisor accused her of stealing them. Upset and outraged by the accusation, Rosa could only rely on an interpreter brought in to explain her case. The incident resulted in three days' suspension from work, for which she had to sign a document consenting to the suspension. The only Mexican woman in our study with

union protection, Rosa was sent back to work by her representative and was continually harassed by her supervisor. The incident is worth recounting to convey the injustice and humiliation experienced by those who are least protected:

> I haven't had any [problem] on this job. I'm very much at ease there. But I had problems when I worked at the Hilton. I had a problem with a supervisor. I never had any problem on my jobs before. . . . She went to talk to her superior and said she had problems with me. Since I didn't know how to speak English, they got an interpreter. I said through the interpreter, "Why does she say she has problems with me? I'm the one that has problems with her. She has been working here for 15 days; I have been working here for almost three years." I don't know her race. I think she is American — who knows. She speaks English. Her name is Paulina. She made my life miserable.
>
> Let me tell you what happened. When you are poor that's the way things are . . . I found a pair of pants and a T-shirt. I'm poor, but I wasn't planning to take those clothes. . . . The clothes weren't worth anything. They even had holes. I thought, in any case, I'm going to take [the clothes] downstairs to the office and let them decide what they want to do with them. I think that after a certain time, they [management] give away the clothes nobody has claimed. So, I was planning to take them [the clothes] to the office. I also found a ketchup bottle. At that time, we were needy. So, I thought to take the ketchup bottle downstairs to the office along with the clothes, but I was going to ask in the office if I could take home the ketchup bottle. In those days I was having my period. A lady there gave me two Kotex — they gave us free Kotex in the hotel. Oh, I don't know if I should tell you about this. It was a nasty thing. I was in a hurry because I needed to go to the bathroom. I was almost done with the work of the day and was going to go home after I went to the bathroom. I always had a little paper bag with me that I brought from home. There, I had all my personal things. Well, it occurred to me to put the clothes I told you about and the ketchup bottle in my little paper bag. But I wasn't planning to take those things home.
>
> In the meantime I had the need to go to the bathroom, left the bag behind and gave my keys to another supervisor that was standing by. So, I went to the bathroom. When I left the bathroom I saw this new supervisor. . . . I got out of the bathroom and was going to pick up my little bag before going to the office. I was going to ask for the ketchup bottle and tell them I had found those clothes. But I didn't have time for anything. Talking by signs I asked the other lady there where my bag was. She said by signs that the supervisor had picked up my bag and taken it to the office. So, I thought, she is thinking I was going to take these things home. Then the supervisor came and told me — she was talking by signs and also used some words I understood — she said I was going to take those things home. I told her I only wanted the ketchup bottle, but was going to ask for it. I told her I didn't want the clothes. She had taken all my things from the bag. Then, she put them back in the bag and told me we were going to see the security [guards].

The [guard] asked me if I wanted to take those things home. I said I wasn't going to take them home. But at that point I was so nervous. I wanted to cry. I said I needed an interpreter. They brought a man. He told me that the woman [the supervisor] said I wanted to steal the clothes and the ketchup bottle. I said I wasn't going to, even if that's what she believed. I said once again that I wanted the ketchup bottle, but was going to ask for it and that I had found the other things [the clothes] and was going to leave them at the office.

And then the woman [the supervisor] said, "What about the Kotex? You wanted to steal those." I had two in my bag because I needed them. I told her, "You don't know how things work here. The other supervisor [the one that was fired] used to give us free Kotex." I had to talk about it because the security [guard] asked me about them. He asked me if I wanted to steal those [sanitary pads]. I said I didn't want to steal those. I said we always got those for free when we needed them. She [the supervisor] said there were new rules now. . . .

She asked me who gave me the Kotex. I said a lady gave them to me and she did so because she was supposed to do that. Can you imagine how ashamed I was? There we were talking about this in the presence of these two men. I said I didn't want to steal anything. Then she [the supervisor] told me I was going to be suspended for three days beginning at that very moment. She told me to go home. I had been working for about 2½ hours. I said, "Why am I suspended? I didn't do anything wrong." She said, "These are the rules." When I was leaving she called me and said, "You are suspended. No more work." I was so nervous. I asked why she was doing that to me. She said I was going to steal those things. Once again, I told her I wasn't going to do that. She said those were the rules and I didn't have a job anymore. I don't even know what I was thinking at the time. I told them I was going to see a lawyer. As soon as I got home I called the union and told them the whole story.

Did you talk to a Spanish-speaking person?

Yes. The person told me I had my job again. Oh no. Nobody speaks Spanish at the union. There was a guy that spoke a little bit of Spanish. I asked a lady to be my interpreter. I told her what happened to me and she told them [the union leadership]. Someone from the union told this lady I had to go back to work. I said I couldn't because I was fired. He said I had to go back. They talked to the supervisor. She [the supervisor] said that according to the rules I had to stay at home for three days and after that, I could go back to work. I returned to my job. But things were bad already. That woman Paulina and another supervisor were watching me all the time. I couldn't do anything without them watching me.

I was fed up. There was this supervisor friend of Paulina always watching me and telling me I did this or that wrong. Once I said to her, "Why don't you go and watch the maids you are assigned to check? It isn't your job to be on this floor watching me. You don't say anything to the other maids that leave their carts outside the rooms. You only rebuke me." I was fed up. The union wanted me to keep working, but they didn't know how they were treating me there. So, I talked

to the people at the union. They couldn't believe what I told them. They were surprised. I stayed working there for several months.

Once I found an airplane ticket in a room, put it in the cart to take to the office, but at the end of the day forgot about it. I left it in the cart. When I was walking downstairs on my way home, I remembered about the ticket. So, I saw Margaret, a Spanish-speaking supervisor, and told her about the ticket. I asked her for the keys to go back to the cleaning room to get the ticket and bring it to her. I tell you, nobody supports you in anything. She told me, "Don't say anything. Leave it there." I said, "Margaret, I can go upstairs and bring the ticket to you." But she didn't want to go through the trouble of separating keys and putting them back. She said, "That's all right. Go home and don't mention it." After I got home, I got a call from Paulina. She said a man had forgotten a plane ticket in his room. I told her I had found it and left it in the cart. I also said I had asked Margaret for the keys to the room, so I could bring the ticket to the office and she said that was all right. She said, "So, Margaret knows about it?" I said, "Yes, she does," and we left things that way. The next day — I had been working for about 1½ hours — when I was told the security [guards] wanted to see me in the office. I was angry at a supervisor because she said I was called downstairs because they [the administration] were going to give me a one-month vacation. I had asked for a two-week vacation before and they didn't want to give it to me. I don't know if she knew what was going on, but she made me believe I was going to get my vacation. I was so happy. But the reason they wanted to see me was to ask me to sign a paper that said I had found the ticket and had not brought it to the office. I got another three days off [suspension].

I looked at Margaret and asked her to say I had told her about the ticket and wanted to bring it to the office before I left work. Who knows what she said in English to the people there. I got three days off. I was getting desperate. Margaret didn't say anything. I was good with her. I could have asked for an interpreter and questioned Margaret. So, I thought, "Let her stay working here. I am the one that will leave." I feel pity for people. I don't know how to confront people when they do something bad to me. That's the way I am. . . . If I were a thief, like she said, I would have stolen something of value. There, I found money and I always returned it to the office. I know anything that was left in a room had to be returned to the office. And I always did just that. I found expensive things like coats, purses with money inside . . . I always returned them. . . . I'm innocent. I'm poor, but I'm also an honest person.

Rosa's precarious economic situation at work is heightened by the few social services available to her and her family. In the 10 years she has been here the only service she has used is ESL classes. Because she had health insurance on her first job — one of the few exceptions in our study — which covered 80 percent of the cost of her two pregnancies, Rosa has never used Medi-Cal, for which she is eligible. Since her first job she has had no health insurance, and told us she would now turn to Medi-Cal in case of emergencies.

Rosa relies heavily on the reciprocal support provided by her family, relatives, and a few friends. She is one of 15 children, with nine of her siblings residing in the U.S., four

in Sacramento. In addition to her husband and two sons, Rosa's brother — a circular migrant with a wife and two children in Mexico — temporarily lives with her, dividing his time between Rosa's and another sister's home. When he is working he contributes a small amount of money to Rosa and also sends money to his family in Mexico. Rosa's 15-year-old sister also lives with her for about two weeks at a time, dividing her time between Rosa's and another sister's home in Sacramento and another sister's home in Los Angeles.

Friends also have helped Rosa obtain employment and housing. After living with her mother-in-law when she first arrived in Sacramento, Rosa moved six times in 10 years, finding apartments through contacts. Her dwellings have been a series of substandard units with heating and cooling problems, cockroaches, and one had an open sewage pit in the backyard. Her current two-bedroom apartment in the Alkali Flat neighborhood, which rents for $350 per month, is government-subsidized, low-income housing and quite livable.

Although Rosa is surrounded by her own family and members of her family of origin, the support they provide each other is necessarily limited by their severely constrained resources. While even minimal economic assistance is crucial and often life-saving, it does not provide an adequate comfort level or opportunity for advancement. Except for the psychological and economic support the family provides, Rosa feels there are few people one can turn to for help. Her experience of life in California often has been isolating, cold, without a basis of trust, but with the potential for betrayal:

> I feel that before [in her hometown] the people you called your friends were really your friends. Nowadays, you don't have friends. I have talked about this with other people at work. And do you know what they told me? Today, there aren't friends. That is to say, anybody can betray you. Before . . . I'm not sure how things were before, but I know that today nobody does anything for you. No. I think it's the kind of life [here]. As the saying goes, "Defend yourself if you can." I don't know why it's that way. Sometimes I think about why it has changed so much. . . . I also think nobody does you a favor. As the saying goes, if you feel any itching, use your own nails.

A crucial factor affecting Rosa's life and her chances for obtaining a level of security, much less advancement, is her lack of English language skills. Rosa is aware that her need to work long hours to support herself and her family and in a workplace where little English is spoken among coworkers leaves her little time or opportunity to learn English. When asked if she could foresee any opportunities to improve her standard of living, she bluntly replied:

> I think we aren't going to get anywhere. Do you know why? Because of the English language. When could I be a supervisor? Never. I have seen some women that get promoted a few months after they started working [at the hotel].

Even with her backbreaking schedule, she has taken the initiative to learn English through ESL classes at a local school. She confided, however, that her husband objected to her going to school, making it difficult to attend class:

> Let me tell you, I study English, but nothing stays in my mind. Maybe it has nothing to do with the problems here [at home]. My husband used to drink a lot and he was very jealous. He said he wasn't, but I know he was. I began taking

English classes at the Washington School at night and I noticed he didn't like it. It was only twice per week, but I wanted to keep going and learn English. But he didn't like it. He said that wasn't true, but I noticed he didn't like my going there.

Rosa revealed that her husband's former drinking problem caused a great deal of pain in their marriage and damage to the family:

How long ago did he quit drinking?

It has been . . . let me see . . . about three years. He doesn't drink anymore. I thank God for that. I suffered a lot. He was so jealous, even if he denied it. Once, a friend — I had very long hair then — pulled my hair. My husband said I was going out with this guy. And then he said he wasn't jealous. He asked me what was going on between the guy and me. I told him there was nothing going on. . . . One day I told him that if he didn't quit drinking, I was going to leave him. I told him he was scaring the children and me. You know what he used to do? He drove when he was very drunk and with all of us in the car. We used to come home crying and scared to death. The next day he would ask me how we got home. Can you imagine? He had been like dead while he drove us home. The next day he didn't remember.

I reached the point that when I knew he had been drinking, I didn't want to go out with him. I didn't even want to be seen with him in front of the apartment's door. When we were invited to a party I always asked him, "Are you going to drink? If so, I'm not going." Even when he said he wasn't going to drink, I decided not to go. I was worried about the kids, they were scared. That's how he began to quit drinking. I also began telling him about the things he did when he was drunk — the next day after he had been drinking, he didn't remember anything he did. He didn't realize anything. I know he didn't because sometimes I took money from his wallet and he didn't realize it. I decided to take money from his wallet and save it because I wasn't working at the time. I thought of using the money to buy a ticket to go to Mexico. I wasn't going to live with him that way. There were times he came home at 2 or 3 in the morning and screamed at me, asking for food. He wanted me to make dinner for him at that time. I was so afraid. The next day, after he recovered from his hangover, I used to tell him what he had done. He used to tell me that when he was that way, I should hide or refuse to open the door for him. I told him, "you can say that now, but believe me when you are drunk you don't reason. Are you stupid or what?" I knew I couldn't do that. When he drank, he lost control of everything.

The most immediate problem Rosa faces is the future of her marriage and her ability to support her sons if she leaves her husband. Rosa feels that her husband's behavior has improved since he quit drinking, and he now shares the housecleaning and dinner preparation. But he has left the family when they have argued, staying at his siblings' or cousins' homes. Given the instability and conflict Rosa experiences at home, her employment and low-income apartment are minimal requirements for her and her sons' survival, as she is well aware:

> Before I had a job, I was afraid of living [on my own]. For example, when I saw him drunk I thought, if I leave him, what am I going to do? One is afraid. But once you have a job, you feel things are different. One is not as dependent . . . that's why I got this apartment. If anything happens, I will tell him to leave. I won't know how or where to get another apartment like this.

Moreover, although she has used few social services and those for which she is eligible are few, underfunded, and in danger of being cut, the knowledge that assistance exists for her children while she becomes self-supporting provides some reassurance and resolve for survival in the U.S.:

> Let me tell you what I have thought. . . . The truth is that I don't trust him anymore. If we separate, I'm not going back to Mexico. Here, I can get help. There, I wouldn't get any help [from the government]. So, I have thought that if we separate, I would continue renting my apartment. I know that if I go to talk [with the apartment administration] and tell them I'm by myself, they would reduce my rent. And I know that if I don't have enough money, the government would at least help my children. That's why I think that if he ever leaves us, I'm not going back to Mexico. . . . If I went back to Mexico, do you know the only thing I could do? I would be sewing blouses. I don't think I would be doing even that. Well, I would be sewing shirt fronts. Do you think I could support myself and the children doing that? It would be better if I stay here.

THE INCREASING SIGNIFICANCE OF GENDER: IMPLICATIONS FOR STATE POLICY

The above stories portray crucial aspects of daily life for Mexican immigrant women. Work and family are central, presenting arenas of support and conflict. Family networks form part of the transnational circuit that provides assistance and information to enable the women's journey and settlement. Yet family relations also embody strain and conflict, which is less noted in the extensive and often highly laudatory literature on social networks. The Mexican families we studied generally provided as much support as they could to immediate members, and often to nieces, nephews, and cousins. Assistance consisted primarily of room and board for temporary periods, information about adjusting to daily life in Sacramento, babysitting, and the ever-important housing and job contacts. Yet because the families we studied were poor or had low incomes, the assistance they could provide, beyond crucial psychological support, was necessarily limited.

As Mexican women come to the U.S. to work, their backgrounds and what they bring with them are important factors affecting their adjustment in California. The majority of the women we studied had some work experience in Mexico and generally a sixth-grade education, qualifying them primarily for low-paying, low-skilled jobs, usually with no benefits and little room for advancement. In addition to working long hours with low pay, Mexican women often face conflict at home as traditional gender roles and family relations are challenged and begin to change. For example, many of the men objected to their wife's

or partner's work outside the home, though they recognized the need for the women to work. Husbands and partners also had to adjust their notions of men's and women's work inside the home as they took on domestic chores. Moreover, several husbands perceived that the women's wages, as they often do, increased their decision-making at home, as illustrated by the case of Rosa and her husband:

> I told him, if we both have jobs, then we have to share everything. And he said to me, "Because you're in California you already feel that women are in charge at home." . . . He has told me he has noticed that since I have a job, I want to tell him what to do. I tell him that isn't what I mean. . . . He thinks he used to set the rules. But after I got a job, I don't let him order me what to do. . . . I tell him I don't see it as me or him giving orders. I tell him I think we need to reach agreements.

With few social services available to Latino migrants, the Mexican women and men in our study rely heavily on family networks and more generally on Spanish-speaking enclaves which encompass their homes, their jobs, and their neighborhoods. In fact, our interviewees tended to adapt to this existing Mexican community rather than the larger U.S. society. These enclaves have been crucial to survival, providing comfort, protection, cultural familiarity, and jobs. They have also enabled Latinos to reconstruct and therefore enliven aspects of Mexican culture in the U.S. Yet they also present limitations for Mexicans' adjustment to the larger U.S. society. Like Rosa, many Mexican immigrants without English language skills get trapped in marginal jobs inside the enclave or secondary service-sector jobs. The pattern then becomes cyclical. Spanish-speaking enclaves and jobs in which English is not spoken among coworkers present few opportunities to learn English to obtain better jobs, which increases immigrants' marginalization.

Understanding the crucial aspects of work and family for Mexican immigrants illuminates the social services needed to bolster the strengths and reduce the limitations of these dimensions of daily life. One basic necessity for Mexican immigrants and their children is improved health care. Medi-Cal was the primary and in most cases only social service used by the women in our study. Without health insurance benefits on the job, the women relied on Medi-Cal for the birth and care of their children. After their children's births, the undocumented women (who were the majority in our study) only had access to Medi-Cal for emergencies. Six women in our study had never used any type of health assistance or sought health care, and all but one woman with health insurance had no access to any type of preventive care, the most effective and least costly measure for long-term health. In addition, the women who did seek health care, particularly at clinics, saw the need for more bilingual providers. Thus, the service that Maria and the mobile clinic provides is crucial although insufficient for the great need for preventive and other health care that exists in these immigrant enclaves.

Effective and accessible training in English as a Second Language (ESL) is critical for the adjustment and advancement of Latino immigrants, and improved bilingual education in the early grades is essential for the advancement of their children. The women in our study thought English speaking ability was more valuable than being documented for obtaining a good job. For someone like Rosa, ESL training is a necessity for promotion to a supervisorial level. Moreover, it would enable her to partake in important day-to-day

functions such as school meetings, which are held in English. The education of her children is so important to Rosa that she regularly attends these meetings, understanding little of the proceedings but feeling that at least her presence demonstrates her concern.

In tandem with effective English language acquisition programs, job training is needed to supplement the skills of the women we interviewed. As the majority were working or had worked in low-paying, low-skilled jobs, working, per se, is not a problem for them. Increasing basic skills through language acquisition and job training would enable the women to move out of or expand enclave- or secondary-sector work into higher paying jobs for advancement. At the same time, it would allow them to take advantage of initial, entry-level jobs for survival without being trapped by them. For someone with Maria's initiative, whose attempt to locate better-paying jobs is now limited by her lack of training, the payoff would be high. Moreover, the basic requirements of health care, English speaking ability, and training are necessary to enable many Mexican immigrants to advance beyond the work they do — which is often essential to but poorly rewarded in the U.S. economy.

Chapter 3

STATE VIOLENCE AND SURVIVAL: VOICES OF SALVADORAN REFUGEES

The conventional view of social networks is that they operate entirely outside the public sphere. They are thought of as reliable and enduring forms of social support for individuals and households based on the informal social ties binding people to such private spheres as the nuclear or extended family (kinship), the ties of intimacy (the friendship network), or the common experience of locality (village ties). They are sometimes even thought of as primordial forms of social solidarity that exist naturally, and existed prior to the artificial formation of social relations based on ties to politics and the state.

This formulation is not very useful for understanding how social networks operate among Salvadoran refugees in San Francisco. One legacy of the turmoil of the civil war in El Salvador has been to undermine the viability of informal social support networks based solely on kinship, friendship, or locality ties. Twelve years of political oppression, armed struggle, and civil war in El Salvador have divided families, destroyed many lives crucial to the sustenance of kinship and friendship networks, scattered migrants across localities both internally and in receiving counties, and reduced the material resources available to those trying to sustain social networks based solely on friendship, kinship, or village solidarity. Furthermore, the polarized politics of everyday life in El Salvador has engendered widespread suspicion and mistrust. The voices of the Salvadoran refugees we have heard frequently speak of the betrayal of such ties by "an ear" (a death squad spy) or a fearful and threatened relative, neighbor, or former friend.

The harsh political conditions in El Salvador are compounded and reinforced by the unfavorable economic conditions confronting the country's migrants to San Francisco's Mission District. As in many other major American cities, San Francisco's metropolitan labor market experienced major structural changes throughout the 1980s. In the nation as a whole, traditional manufacturing employment decreased by 6 percent while employment in the highly income-polarized service sector increased by 27 percent. The San Francisco Bay Area was no exception to this trend. Global industrial restructuring reduced the number of traditional blue-collar jobs in the Bay Area by 9.6 percent, while service work experienced growth in both the highly paid, specialized white-collar, and the low-wage sectors. At the upper end of the service sector, executives and administrative positions grew by over 50 percent and professional specialists in such fields as finance, insurance, real estate, and engineering, expanded by 44.8 percent. At the opposite end, low-wage service employment, ranging from food services to janitorial work, expanded by 17.3 percent during the 1980s, and nonunionized common laborers grew by 14.5 percent (McLeod, 1992).

The new pattern of employment growth in the service sector of global cities like San Francisco and their surrounding regions has been income-polarized, as Sassen has shown (1984, 1988). In the 1980s San Francisco became both an important financial center on the Pacific Rim and a mecca to new immigrants from Latin America and Asia. The defense buildup of the Reagan years added to the polarized income pattern of the region by swelling the number of engineers and other specialists employed in suburban Bay Area high-tech firms. The wealthy lifestyles of these new managers and professionals created the types of service jobs that new immigrants tended to fill — e.g., as maids, gardeners, and food service workers. The growth of San Francisco's tourist sector during this period (Hartman, 1984) further ensconced many new immigrants in marginally paid labor market niches as maids or kitchen workers in hotels and motels or as restaurant workers in an increasingly wide range of ethnic restaurants, whose large number and diversity added to the city's attraction as a tourist mecca and ensured that wages would remain low.

Until the late 1980s this polarized employment pattern, while offering little hope of upward mobility, at least increased the likelihood that undocumented Salvadoran refugees living in the Mission District could find work. By the late 1980s and early 1990s (when our ethnographies were conducted), the prospects of steady work, albeit low-paid and unprotected, was by no means a certainty. The prolonged recessionary downturn in the national economy, now aggravated by reductions in defense spending ushered in by the end of the Cold War, has worsened the labor market prospects upon which Salvadoran refugees arriving in San Francisco earlier in the 1980s could rely. Moreover, the highly paid workers in financial and engineering services are now facing increasing employment uncertainty as well. Many companies that fueled economic growth in the Bay Area in the 1980s, like Chevron, Bank of America, and Apple Computer, are addressing uncertain or changing market conditions by cutting costs, consolidating and merging, and reducing their permanent work force. In the face of recessionary fears, many highly paid professionals have cut back on the patterns of personal consumption that fueled the growth of low-wage service work and provided employment for immigrant labor. In addition, the growth of tourism in San Francisco slowed following the Loma Prieta earthquake and has not fully rebounded since then because of continuing recessionary fears nationally.

The precariousness of labor market opportunities for Salvadoran refugees is compounded by the high cost of housing throughout the Bay Area, a trend predicted to continue throughout the 1990s (McCleod, 1992). High housing costs elsewhere in the city and region have prompted some more affluent segments of the rental housing market to compete with Salvadoran refugees for available rental housing in parts of the Mission District, thereby driving rents higher than they otherwise would be, and exacerbating the problem of overcrowded housing conditions. Today the Salvadoran refugee population in the Mission District constitutes a large underground social sector, living in very overcrowded housing necessitated by the Salvadorans' uniformly low-wage jobs combined with a tight housing market. In recent years the more affluent migrants to the Mission District have succeeded in establishing both a residential corridor called "the new bohemia" and a lesbian shopping and residential enclave (Garcia & Chung, 1990: A5). Other recent arrivals seeking housing in the Mission have included new Chinese immigrants from Hong Kong, Southeast Asian refugees, and other Central American refugees from Nicaragua and

Guatemala. The gentrification of parts of the Mission and new investment from Hong Kong have increased fears that Salvadoran and other Latino households may be displaced. Everyday living conditions in the Mission have also been affected by an expansion of the number of people living in residential hotels, who moved there as a result of damage to residential hotels in other parts of San Francisco caused by the Loma Prieta earthquake.

A large majority of the Salvadoran refugees we interviewed in San Francisco's Mission District are surviving in this inhospitable setting on the basis of the fragile ties of resource-pooling and information-sharing by fellow Salvadoran and other Latino migrants, many of whom were unknown to them prior to their arrival in the Mission. They are often forced to seek assistance from the charity of religious-based community organizations; they less often use social services provided by the State of California (largely, although not exclusively, restricted to Medi-Cal for pregnant women and related programs for women with infant children like WIC). And even less often are they able to count on reliable material support from networks of established Salvadoran residents with whom they share ties of kinship, friendship, or village solidarity.

THE WEAKENING OF SALVADORAN SOCIAL NETWORKS IN SAN FRANCISCO

Over three-fourths of the Salvadoran refugees we interviewed have sought and tried to rely on the material support of kin living in the United States, who are themselves increasingly strapped for resources in worsening economic times. Despite the fact that our sample of Salvadoran refugees included all segments of Salvadoran society — rural peasants, urban workers, middle and upper classes — nearly all of them are employed in poorly paid work at the lower end of the service sector in San Francisco and other Bay Area communities. Their kin, who are also generally concentrated in the poorly paid sector, are often unable or unwilling to provide them with much material assistance. When the recently arrived refugees turn from kin to work in order to survive, they are able to find jobs primarily in restaurants, or hotels, or in janitorial or maid positions where their coworkers are mainly other Spanish-speaking migrants and refugees. Thus they are not well situated to acquire English language skills through social network ties to English-speaking people. Facing discrimination and often poor working conditions in their workplaces, they seldom complain for fear of being deported as illegal immigrants.

Their journey to the United States is often traumatic, and costly. Lacking the informal sources of information and material support to facilitate their journey possessed by those who rely on the sanctuary movement, most typical Salvadoran refugees must pay for all of their room and board along the way and rely on the assistance of a paid, but often unreliable, "coyote" to guide their journey and smuggle them across the U.S.-Mexican border. This leaves them either without surplus household capital or deeply in debt once they arrive in the Mission District.

Their past and present experiences have fostered an almost endless sense of dislocation and displacement. In short, the structural context for migration and resettlement for many Salvadoran refugees is traumatic and unsupportive. Those who lack enduring ties to primary

social support networks, and the resources they provide, often are quite inventive in dealing with these conditions. Yet they fight such an uphill battle in the United States that some even look back nostalgically to a return to their war-torn and economically devastated country in some unspecified, yet still hoped for, future.

The stories of two of our subjects, Alicia and José, convey different facets of the complex and highly differentiated story of the efforts by ordinary men and women to make meaningful lives for themselves as they moved from impossible conditions of political violence in El Salvador to unpromising conditions of economic survival in contemporary California. Alicia's story reveals the limits of kinship and neighborhood ties in providing social support for Salvadoran refugees in California; José's highlights the waste of human resources entailed in the limited labor market opportunities currently available to Salvadoran refugees in San Francisco.

The Limits of Kinship and Neighborhood Ties: Alicia

Alicia, who is 40 years old, was forced to leave her suburb of San Salvador in March 1990 with almost no prior preparation, out of fear for her life. Her migration experience sheds important light on the uses and limits of kinship and village-based social support networks among Salvadoran refugees. Alicia came from a humble background. As a child she was abandoned by her father and was raised in a small town in the countryside by her mother, who took in washing and ironing and sold food as a street vendor to support her household. At the age of 19 Alicia married a radio repairman. Once married, Alicia and her husband moved to San Salvador in hopes of finding work. Alicia worked at various jobs, including selling in a store and housecleaning, until she began having children. Alicia's husband was able to get some work with other technicians who were willing to share their tools with him. However, with children to support, their earnings were not sufficient. As housing costs rose and intensifying military offensives forced them to move to further outlying suburbs of San Salvador, it became increasingly difficult for Alicia and her husband to secure their livelihood.

In 1985, as a household survival strategy, Alicia's husband Pedro migrated to San Francisco where his mother lived, leaving Alicia alone to support the children. Pedro periodically sent money and goods to Alicia, as his economic circumstances allowed. Because of limited opportunities to practice his skilled trade in San Francisco, Pedro decided to move to Los Angeles, where Salvadoran refugees are less restricted to low-paid work in the service sector. Pedro arranged for money to continue to be sent to Alicia through his mother, who remained in San Francisco's Mission District. However, Alicia's life became appreciably more difficult as financial remittances and useful goods (clothing and household utensils) sent by her husband through her mother-in-law arrived less and less frequently. As she was too poor to pay rent, Alicia moved into an abandoned house belonging to her mother-in-law in an isolated suburb on the edge of San Salvador. There, Alicia cleaned houses for miserable wages that barely enabled her to feed her children. For lack of resources, she was forced to send two of her children back to the countryside to live with her mother. In the face of increasing political turmoil, economic uncertainty, and

military violence, Alicia turned to an Evangelical religious sect for spiritual comfort and material support, and became an active member. The church offered schooling to her children and Alicia began learning nursing skills.

After a long weekend in March 1990 Alicia was forced to migrate, literally overnight, from her small, war-torn community of La Zacamil, to San Francisco's Mission District. Among her community activities on behalf of her sect, Alicia practiced first aid. One Friday evening she heard a knock at her door. When Alicia opened it she found two men carrying a third person who had been wounded earlier that day in a military offensive. She was uncertain at the time whether the wounded man was a member of the Salvadoran army or the guerilla opposition. Because of her religious convictions she felt it was her responsibility to tend to his wounds in either case. The next day she worried that the blood stains left on both her front door and floor might make the army suspicious. This feeling intensified when one of her neighbors told her she had been accused of assisting the guerrilla forces by other neighbors.

On Monday evening six Salvadoran army soldiers visited Alicia. In the following passages she chillingly recounts that confrontation:

> That day, we worked early. And I arrived at the house around two o'clock in the afternoon. Around six or seven at night, they knocked on the door. "Ay," I complained. "Go around, you bother so much," I told them. "I am mopping." They knocked again. [Then]] they knocked very hard another time . . . I looked through the window . . . and I saw that there were convoys. Who knows if it was the military. "We want to talk to you Mrs.," they told me. Yes! I opened the door. And so, I go out, right? The one who doesn't owe, doesn't owe. I opened the door. They didn't come in. They looked at me, and he tells me: "Look, we want to speak with you." Seriously, he tells me, "We need to speak with you. Is it true that you can inject?" I felt very afraid. "Yes." "And how do you do it?" "Well, in the communities where I have lived, I learned from the mayor's office," I tell him. "From the government, they teach first aid, and everything. I can do a little of that," I told him. "But, do you inject all the people?" "No," I told him. "I inject my family," I told him. "My children, or people like that — the neighbors only." He asked whether that was my career. I told him no. . . . Then, he [asks] me: "On Friday, did you attend to a few wounded?" "I didn't," I told him. "I didn't." And then [they told me] they saw the blood. . . .
>
> They came in and they told me: "But look, there is blood here." Then, I told him: "I don't know. I saw that blood there, and I washed it." . . . And that doesn't go away. But nobody has hurt himself here." Then, they [asked] the children: "Has your mother attended any wounded?" "No," they told him. "On Friday?" he asked.
>
> One of the children told him, "There was vigil at the church on Friday, and we went to church. . . . So I don't know what you are talking about." And they [the kids] went into the other rooms in the house. Then, they told me: "Look we have an arrest order for you."
>
> Arrest order! "I haven't killed anybody," I told him. Then, they asked me for syringes. "I have," I told them, "the ones that you discard. Here they are." I gave them to him. He asked me if I had antibiotics, if I sold medicines. "Look, this is

not a pharmacy," I told him. "I don't even have money to sell medicines. I have my little bit of alcohol, hydrogen peroxide, merthiolate, cotton, aspirins, pills, home medicines," I tell him, "that is good for my children."

The soldiers then noticed a case containing hypodermic needles and syringes used by doctors to inject antibiotics and pain-killing drugs. Although she had used a needle and syringe from this case to treat the wounded guerrilla, Alicia told her interrogators that such equipment was no longer used because of the risk of spreading AIDS by unsterilized needles. To deflect them from further inquiry, Alicia then challenged the legality of their effort to search her home and arrest her.

Then, I [told] him: "You cannot say why you are going to capture me. . . . Show me the order." Then I asked, "Have they given you a search warrant . . . so that you can enter to see? You don't have an authorization to get inside this house." I told him, "You can be the authority, but you have to have a search warrant."

And you asked for the warrant?

Yes. Then, one of them told me: "Ah, you talk as if you were a contra — that you help them." "No, I speak my rights. If I know about human rights, I know about that. I know that if you bring an order, you can search everything," I told him. "But only if you bring that order, otherwise no."

Then I took a note of the numbers [on their uniforms, and he asked me] "Why are you taking notes?"

"Because if something happens to me, I can say that you came. And I am going to leave right now to go to the command post . . . to find out if you are part of the civilian defense." Then, I . . . told him, "one doesn't get inside the house by force."

Then he [asked] me: "Did you attend them or not? What we want to know is if you attended those wounded." "Look," I told him, "I didn't attend them. But if I had been here, I would have attended them. Because if they had been . . . [anyone] asking for help I would help him," I told him, "because I am human. As a human I can help them. I have the right to save anybody's life. And no, no . . . Unfortunately, no, I didn't help them."

And then, they came in. "You can come in. Enter if you want. Go and see the garbage. There it is. That I haven't thrown it away for a week. Come in," I told him. "But from here to there, I don't respond if something happens to you. Because I am in my house."

And how many men were they?

They were six. "(F)rom here to there you come in as thieves." And then, I told him: "There are laws that protect you. That you even can kill," I told him, "inside your own house. If they are stealing, I can kill," I told him. "You have come to steal, to steal in a house, to enter!" I told him.

You had a lot of courage!

And one of them was a commander. I don't know of what group. Then, he [asked if he could come in and I showed him] "Here it is. This is the type of medicine that I have. I don't sell antibiotics, don't even sell drugs, not even anything." I [asked] him: "Or are you from narcotics? What are you?"

Then, he tells me: "And why do you speak like that?"

"Look, I have worked in a lot of places. I have worked with a lot of people and I know how to talk to them. I am not from the wilderness," I told him. "I know how to speak. 'Do you bring an arrest order? Bring it.'"

[Then] I told him: "Oh yes, what I want to tell you is that I am not going to live [here] forever, because I am going to the United States. Just in case you come back to look for me, I am telling you already, I am not going to be here . . ."

Did you have a trip already planned?

No, I told them like that.

Alicia was true to her word. After the soldiers took a few of her syringes with them and left her house, she immediately told the friends from her church what had happened. They informed her that if she were certain she had assisted a guerrilla and not the army they would put her in touch with a religiously based social support network that would get her out of the country. Because Alicia was now certain that she had helped the opposition and not the government, she accepted the name of a person in the sanctuary movement who would assist her in leaving the country.

Alicia also sought help from her mother-in-law in San Francisco. When she called, the mother-in-law asked if she had been receiving remittances directly from her husband. When Alicia said no, the older woman promised to arrange for a loan to get her and her children to the United States and urged Alicia to go to Guatemala, where she could stay safely under the protection of the evangelicals until a loan could be arranged. She packed immediately, sent one of her children to stay with her mother, and left for Guatemala with the other four.

In Guatemala, Alicia stayed with fellow evangelicals who charged her nothing to stay with them for four months. She contributed to the household by helping out with the sewing. Because she lacked papers she could get no other work there to earn money toward her future expenses. Eventually her mother-in-law sent her $4,000 to make the journey through Mexico to California.

Alicia's journey there was harrowing. She did not have the protection of fellow evangelicals in Mexico, whose rate of religious conversion from Catholicism has been smaller than in the war-torn countries of El Salvador and Guatemala. She had to find her way through the country with the cash at her disposal until reaching the U.S.-Mexico border, where she could be smuggled across by a paid coyote. Along the way she experienced a host of dangers that have been recounted again and again in our ethnographic interviews. In Mexico, Alicia was assaulted three times, once by Mexican policemen and twice by thieves. The policemen demanded and received bribes. This is a typical story told by our Salvadoran sojourners, particularly women. Alicia described her encounters very matter-of-factly.

Did they steal from you [in Mexico]?

Yes. They assaulted me three times. The first time, it was the policemen, right? One must give money. After that there were thieves. . . . [F]or a miracle of God's they didn't do anything to us. We were only a few, the ones that were coming. We were only the kids, myself, the Señor who was bringing us, and another couple. And then, when they assaulted us, they only grabbed me and my kids.

They were men, a few men . . . I told them that I didn't bring any money. And, as always, trusting in God, and praying to God. I opened my things for them and said "This is what I bring. It is everything that I bring." They wanted everything. I told them: "You are not leaving anything at all, not a bit of money." Then, they only grabbed a large bill, and they left the rest . . . to at least be able to get in the bus.

But ahead the same guys were waiting. . . . And we had to jump a few bushes, very high. I sprained my foot. Later, I couldn't walk. But the fright made me walk. And with my foot very swollen, the shoe didn't fit anymore. I had to remove [my shoes] later. And my feet peeled because of walking and walking. Because we walked day and night.

Night and day. And the kids . . ?

They walked too. We passed by Mexico during the cyclone. It was like a cyclone. We passed through it. And realize[d] that we passed in the middle of the storm. After it got a little calmed, other people behind us were coming, but really really far behind. And they assaulted those people and raped them. They raped a 15-year-old girl. They raped her. And they took the clothes. And the clothes they were wearing were all torn and ripped. . . . We asked for lodging to wash the clothes and continue the next day.

When we were getting out the next day, we put on the clothes slightly humid . . . And the girl couldn't even walk.

Afterwards, just about getting to Districto Federal (Mexico City) they appeared to us again. But always policemen. I gave them money. They ask for money.

By the time Alicia was smuggled through Tijuana and paid her coyote on arrival in Los Angeles she had nothing left of the $4,000 her mother-in-law had borrowed to get her and the children to San Francisco. She was substantially in debt. Although her mother-in-law brought her as far as San Francisco she was initially unwilling to include her daughter-in-law in her immediate household, which included seven of her own sons and daughters. Alicia was uncertain if her husband, Pedro, from whom she had been separated for five years, was living in San Francisco or Los Angeles. She and her children thus initially moved into an apartment with six other Salvadoran refugees to whom she was not related. This arrangement, which provided for their immediate survival, was highly unstable because six adults and four children were living in an apartment whose lease limited occupancy to three persons. Only two of the adults worked full time; a third was a part-time house-cleaner.

At the beginning of 1992 Alicia still lived in San Francisco, but under different circumstances. In a followup contact by a Salvadoran member of our research team we found that Alicia had been reunited with her husband two months after our initial interview. The reunited couple and their children first moved in with the mother-in-law. Through his interaction with Alicia, his mother, and various persons for whom his mother had worked as a housecleaner, Pedro learned that remittance money he had intended to be sent to Alicia through his mother, as well as donations of clothing and household goods for Alicia given to his mother by her employers and community organizations, had never reached Alicia. The mother-in-law had used these resources to support her own immediate family. When Pedro confronted his mother with what he had learned, she threw him, Alicia, and their children out of her household.

Alicia, Pedro, and their children are now living together as a nuclear family, but their financial situation remains precarious. He is employed as an on-call, skilled maintenance worker for a landlord who owns several buildings. She remains at home with the teenage children and does part-time housecleaning when she can find work. They face a mountain of debt. With no other informal sources of social support to rely on, Pedro and Alicia have turned to a limited number of community organizations in the Mission District. These organizations have provided them with such needed commodities as food and clothes and with information about possible jobs, medical aid, and legal services. Alicia is hopeful that her children, who are learning English in school at a much faster rate than their parents, may be able to build a decent future in San Francisco when they reach adulthood. She is far less hopeful about her own prospects. Alicia longs for a possible return to El Salvador, which she says she would never have left in the first place had it not been for the threats on her life. Yet she still fears for her life if she were to return.

Politics, Work, and Displacement: José

Our ethnographic interview with José captures poignantly the dislocation of everyday life within El Salvador caused by forced internal migration and the politicization of daily life that has accompanied the country's protracted civil war. When asked to describe the place he is from, José cannot give a fixed answer. The answer he does give captures the displacements he had experienced long before coming to California. In mid-1990, when we interviewed José, he was 24 years old. His first forced displacement, as a result of the war, came when he was around 13, in the middle of the sixth grade. He had to leave his small agricultural canton for the nearby city of Sensuntepeque when his family was forced to abandon the farm they owned. Overnight they became both landless and uprooted. As the war produced the forced migration to Sensuntepeque, it undermined the material basis for the family's livelihood and their sense of place. The following exchanges, occurring at the very beginning of our interview, convey the multiplicity of displacements that are experienced by many of our subjects, who originally came from small communities in El Salvador and now occupy a social space in which their meaningful social relations are no longer rooted in a single place or nation.

Why don't you talk about Sensuntepeque — how big is it, who lived there?

It is a city like San Francisco, with lots of hills. There are not many businesses there, because it is too far away from San Salvador, very near the border with Honduras.

How far away from San Salvador?

Three hours by bus. Generally two hours and 45 minutes, but almost three hours.

How many people live there?

Well . . . ah . . . I am practically not from there. I migrated from my canton to Sensuntepeque due to the war. This situation has made the city grow more.

So you spent almost all your life in the canton up until the sixth grade . . .

Only half of sixth grade, as I did the rest in Sensuntepeque.

What did the majority of people do there in the canton?

They were farmers, they grew basic grains, but they were small farmers.

And in Sensuntepeque, what did they do?

In Sensunte, people trade cattle and pigs that are brought from Honduras. They sell them to people . . . from San Salvador. They grow very little cereals.

So what do the majority of the people in Sensunte do?

I couldn't tell you. For instance, in my family we would work as wage labor in different farms for a day or so. Then my brother came here and so he started to help us.

Talk about your family — what did they do, how many brothers and sisters do you have?

We are five boys and one girl.

Your parents lived with you? Did they go with you to Sensunte?

Yes, we all went together. After a while my oldest brother, looking at the conditions in which we were living, almost subhuman, got some strength and came over here (USA). With his help we bought a house in Sensunte. But what we did was work in the fields, helping my father.

What did your mother do?

Household chores.

And your father?

Worked in the fields.

Did you own some land?

In the canton yes, but not in the city. The problem was that we abandoned the house and the land in the canton, so finally we lost everything. Other people came and took possession and when we decided to go back, we just couldn't do it. My father didn't even like the city, but we just couldn't go back . . .

José worked hard to empower himself through education to become a teacher. He thought this would free him from the constraints of marginality and daily agricultural wage labor, which was his father's lot. Once he got a degree from a local technological college, José found that political rather than technical criteria had become the norm in hiring teachers in El Salvador. José's story echoes that of numerous others about the politicization of skilled labor markets told by white-collar migrants from El Salvador. Frustrated by his lack of appropriate political connections with established authorities, and encouraged by his brother's successful migration to California during the economic boom years of the early 1980s, José came to San Francisco in August 1989. In the following passages he describes the considerations he took into account in deciding to migrate to San Francisco as a survival strategy:

Did you have another source of income besides your father's work?

No, just my father's work in the fields. This was at the beginning. My father keeps doing the same, but in my case, for instance, I decided to keep on with my studies, but my father wouldn't pay for them so I needed to work. I would work in the mornings at a bakery delivering bread, and in the afternoons I would study. That is how I became a teacher in El Salvador.

So you got your degree in Sensunte?

Yes, I always studied there. I got my degree from El Tecnologico de San Vicente that had a branch there . . .

Did you work in El Salvador?

Yes.

What you earned, was it sufficient to live comfortably or did you need more?

It wasn't enough. After my high school I had the good luck of getting half of a scholarship due to my good grades. To become a teacher I had to ask for a credit as nobody could help me, not even my father. But no, the money I earned wasn't enough.

Pulling all the resources together, was your family able to live comfortably?

No.

So when you left El Salvador, what were you doing?

Nothing. I never worked as a teacher there. I tried to get a job, but as everything is so politicized, I never was able to get a job.

So what were you doing before you left?

Nothing.

You did not work?

No, I didn't.

So you never worked either with your high school [diploma] or as a teacher in El Salvador? Couldn't you go to San Salvador?

No, but in Sensunte I applied. But I did not have any political connections to get anything. I even went to San Salvador to talk to the Secretary of Education, but they refused to give me an interview, so I couldn't do anything.

When did you arrive here?

August of [1989].

Who decided that you should come over here?

I decided. My parents did not want me to come as they were going to stay almost by themselves over there. But I decided to come.

Are you one of the oldest children?

No, I have two older brothers, but they are also here. One of my younger brothers is also here. So the two youngest ones were there. I tried to stay there as I was studying.

Why did you come here to San Francisco?

Because my brothers are here . . . this was the best possibility.

José soon discovered that everyday life in San Francisco for Salvadoran refugees is not what he had imagined. He had imagined his brother was doing quite well because he had earlier sent the family remittances enabling them to buy a house in El Salvador. Instead, he finds him "in pretty bad shape." His brother's wife has given birth and they lack health insurance and have many bills to pay. Since the couple work different shifts in different restaurants they seldom see each other. In order to meet household expenses the brother and his wife live in a nine-person household including the couple, José's three other brothers, a cousin and one unrelated individual, whom José reports "is giving us some hard times." He notes that "almost everybody works at restaurants as cooks, busboys, dishwashers or waiters" and that none have acquired much English because "we communicate with each other in Spanish."

José earns $5 an hour as a busboy at a restaurant that serves American food. Most of his coworkers are Anglos, and this is the only chance he gets to pick up any English. When asked about his job, José initially says he has no problems at work except for the difficulty he experiences when he doesn't understand what his employer or coworkers are saying. However, when asked to describe work related-differences between his past and present life, José reveals the deep sense of alienation he has experienced in his job:

Let's try and compare what you do here and what you used to do in El Salvador. Are there differences?

Yes, there are big differences. For instance, I had never worked in a restaurant before . . . . there is a lot of difference. Over there you are used to working in the fields and then I worked making bread. There are lots of differences . . .

But when you were selling bread you were also dealing with people, just as you are here. What would be the difference?

There, I would deliver the bread to the people and I could communicate with them easily. Here, if they ask me something, I don't understand. Now I know what things a restaurant has . . . The only difference is that of communication and

also that here almost everything is mechanized and over there everything is very rustic.

What about differences when dealing with people?

The way they treat you here is very different. You know that Americans get mad very easily and for anything they are already yelling at you. Over there at least they tell you in a better, more passive way. Americans are very good people but they get mad very easily. There is a great difference in character. Over in El Salvador, people are more tolerant.

José feels frustrated at work. Perceiving a tight labor market in San Francisco, he feels that his employers have discriminated against him and a Salvadoran friend who used to work with him. Nevertheless, he contrasts this situation with the politically mediated labor market for school teachers that he left behind when he left El Salvador: "To get a job is very difficult here. There are jobs. Sometimes a friend can get an application for you, will fill it out and submit it, but they will never call you. Sometimes you start working as I did and then after a week they gave me an application to fill out."

So you started working before submitting a application?

Yes, exactly.

But this was due to your friend?

Yes. In El Salvador, on the other hand, you can look for a job and never get one.

Why do you think it is like that?

Due to the economic situation, there is no money to generate new jobs as almost all the money goes to feed the war, to the Ministry of Defense, so the Ministry of Education and Health don't get anything. On the other hand, if you are not a member of a political party you don't get anything either. I didn't like politics, so they told me that [because] I never participated with them I couldn't expect anything from them. Those are the most fundamental reasons, even if you want a job and have the capabilities to do it . . . many times those who work are those involved in drugs. [T]his is very bad for the community. Teachers don't do anything and they are back in the city again without having done a thing. [M]any times there are some openings, but if you don't have political contacts, you don't get them . . .

José reports unmistakable evidence of work discrimination in his restaurant. When asked to give a concrete example of work discrimination, he replied: "For instance, where I work, regarding the salary, they never pay us on time."

Who is "us"?

Me and my Salvadoran friend that used to work there.

So the two Salvadorans wouldn't be paid on time.

That's right. I would see when the others would get paid. Regarding the salary also, the rest is paid higher salaries than me. Even the dishwasher or those who have started working after I started, they get $7 or more . . . and if I ask for a

raise, they tell me that as I don't speak English they cannot give me one . . . even though I work very hard and many times better than the others. You do feel that you are being discriminated against.

José also feels discriminated against outside of work, but because of his experience in El Salvador and illegal status in the U.S. he does not even consider voicing his opposition openly, let alone filing an official complaint. The following exchange illustrates the constraints he feels against openly resisting ethnic discrimination.

Outside of work, do you feel discriminated against?

Yes, even though they say that in San Francisco there isn't much discrimination . . .

So you talk about this with other people or relatives?

Yes, with relatives and friends, but sometimes they say that in Texas there is more discrimination, and I tell them that there is lots of it here too. But one cannot say anything. . . . You don't get anything by complaining, so I don't say anything. I don't want to be fired . . .

José has found adaptation to American life very difficult. He is alienated from his work, yet he has found that both materially and symbolically, "without a job here you are nothing." When asked to describe what he likes most and least about everyday life in the United States, José's responses unmistakably reflect a deep sense of estrangement from his new milieu.

What do you like the best from living here? Is there something you like here?

Well, the fact that you can get a job. At least I am working. I like to work. And I like the fact that I can see the benefits [the money] from working rather fast, then. But at the level of personal satisfaction, or something like that . . . no. I don't like to live here, definitely not.

What is it that you like the least here?

Practically the social environment . . . everything . . . you have your own customs. Coming to live in a different house one feels like a stranger. I would not be able to explain it to you better, but ever since I came here, I feel like a stranger, in one corner.

Do you think that even with the economic problems you had in El Salvador, the every day life was better over there?

I think yes. Even though the situation is pretty bad due to the war and the constant attacks very near where I live, you get used to it. Here you get homesick.

In light of his experiences, José views his migration to the Mission District as an opportunity to create an economic basis for an eventual return to El Salvador, where he still hopes to work as a teacher — his lifelong dream. Yet he also recognizes that this may not be possible in the immediate future. Thus José reluctantly accepts discrimination at work because at least he is working with English-speaking coworkers and learning the language he needs for economic and social empowerment in California.

POLITICAL POLARIZATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT: THE OPPOSITIONAL NETWORK

In the context of polarized politics and protracted political violence in El Salvador, and economic marginalization in San Francisco, the basis of social solidarity and support that has proved most viable and enduring for Salvadoran refugees has been the social network forged by the shared political ideology and experiences of the coalition of oppositional forces that has fought for over a decade to construct an alternative society and set of social relations in El Salvador. Although they constitute fewer than 15 percent of our Salvadoran subjects, those who actively participated in that struggle, and for various reasons chose or were forced to migrate to San Francisco, have had a different migration and settlement experience than have the majority of our respondents who, like José, have been caught in the middle of the political turmoil.

It would be an exaggeration to conclude that the members of the political opposition in El Salvador who have migrated to California are doing substantially better at adapting to American life than the vast majority of our respondents. Nevertheless, the settlement experiences of members of the political opposition have been significantly different. These differences reflect the strong ties of social solidarity forged by their past political or combat experience in the oppositional culture of El Salvador. They reflect, as well, the material and symbolic support provided by sympathetic religious and humanitarian organizations.

How have these social networks of opposition, forged in war and sustained by political commitment and humanitarian concern, operated in mediating the settlement of those who have actively opposed the current regime in El Salvador? How does a tight-knit social network, forged in a nation continuously at war, sustain itself across territorial borders? What can be learned from these Salvadorans' migration experiences about the dichotomy, often too sharply drawn, between formal and informal social support systems in sustaining individuals and households who are part of a transnational migrant stream? The stories of two of our subjects paint a clear picture of how the oppositional social network has provided its members with viable resources for survival and, at times, self-affirmation in the face of seemingly overwhelming obstacles. Consider first the story of Sandra.

Becoming Oppositional: Sandra

Sandra is a 40-year-old women from San Francisco Gotera, in one of El Salvador's liberated zones. She was an active member of the oppositional culture, whose migration to San Francisco was greatly facilitated by the only really viable social network open to Salvadoran refugees — the oppositional network. At the age of 20, Sandra left her rural village to live in San Salvador, primarily to help her younger sisters to get an education. She worked in the Social Security Hospital, initially as a cleaning person. She had obtained her job because of political patronage dispensed to her parents by the rightist government. It was through her work at the hospital that Sandra became politically aware of and began to identify with a perspective that differed radically from that of her parents. Yet, as the following exchanges make clear, the climate of suspicion imparted by the complete

politicization of Salvadoran society made it very difficult for her to gain entry into the oppositional political world.

So, you were in San Salvador studying and working to help your younger sisters get an education?

Yes, once in the capital I began to work for the Social Security Hospital.

What did you do there?

I began as a cleaning person, the job I got from people of the government, from the PCN, because my parents were supporters of this group, and because the man who used to work in the legislature was the son of my mother's boss. But once in the hospital I became acquainted with the unions, and I saw that the unions were concerned about the needs of my fellow workers, and I said, how can I help? I am the daughter of people who had ties with the government, even though I could see and I felt I could help with them. That was how I began to be an active member of the union. Although my job was from the government, not of the union, I became aware of the situation, and studying in high school, and seeing all the injustices that the government makes, I decided to become and be with the union, to help my coworkers in all their necessities.

How long were you in the union?

Well, I began in 1972. Around 1978, the strikes, in which I collaborated greatly, began in the hospital. They lasted until 1989. At the beginning in my job I saw to it that I got my high school education, which I finished in 1975. I was capable of performing other jobs, like secretarial, receptionist. I was very capable, but because the union perceived that I was part of the government, and the people who worked for the government thought I was from the union, I spent many years asking for a change in jobs but I continued cleaning, taking care of patients. . . . I tried to make them understand that I was on their side, and that I was not with the government; because the truth is that I saw so much injustice, all the time of struggle in the union I was there with them day and night . . .

Sandra's full commitment to oppositional struggle, despite the suspicions of her trade union peers, came when one of her brothers was killed by the Salvadoran Army. Below, Sandra describes her conversion to oppositional struggle:

I'm always against injustice, that is how I began to know people of the popular movements, and I would go with them and help them, in the marches and in every way, because I saw that the whole situation was very unjust; in the church, also, I became more conscious when they killed Monsignor Romero, no actually before that, in 1980, when they killed one of my brothers. They came to the town which was liberated. Well, I had also bought a pick-up with my savings, so that my brother could work, because he was an alcoholic. He already had this addiction, so I bought him a pick-up so that he could go to a town called Sociedad and work for a slum. He used to be a cab driver, but they took away his license, so I bought him the pick-up so he would go from the city to the slums. Somebody "burnt" him by telling on him that he used to work for the muchachos [i.e., the

guerrillas], that he would bring them food. There was a strong *contingente*, and they came from Santa Ana, killing people, and they hanged my brother.

I took a lot of consciousness from then on. Also, when the hospital would go on strike, they came and they tortured us, not very greatly, but yes, especially psychologically, and some kicks, when they came as a surprise at midnight and all of that. And that is how we all became conscious of the struggle, that it was necessary to go out in the streets, in marches and all of that sort.

Once she became active in the opposition, Sandra abandoned the cloak of ambiguity that had protected her from physical danger by either side, and had also excluded her from full access to the oppositional support network. Her gain from full acceptance by the network was their unqualified symbolic and material support; the cost was her increased vulnerability to government repression, which eventually forced her to migrate.

The following exchanges vividly depict the character of Sandra's political plight, shed light on the social organization of political repression in El Salvador, and capture the complex interplay of family ties, the state, and the oppositional social network in mediating her departure from El Salvador and her journey through Guatemala and Mexico to California. Sandra begins her story of exit from El Salvador with a literal picture of her dancing. It is an apt metaphor of her dance of life.

When did you leave El Salvador?

I left December 26, 1989. . . . COPREFA began to identify us as terrorists — COPREFA is a group of reporters from the armed forces — then they began to circulate pictures of people from the unions. They called us "terrorists," and I came out dancing in the pictures, and they called me a terrorist. And I continued working in the marches, because I never covered myself, or anything, because I felt I was from the unions and that there was injustice and that there was need to help. So I would go to the marches and meetings that they had about events, forums, also to the university. Then my picture came out and they began to "choose" the people, and so when there was the offensive, I was working in the hospital three days, night and day, and I only came out once to my son and when I came back the next day the national police came and took seven of us, sorry, nine of us.

They took us to the police headquarters and psychologically they mistreated us, some scratches, kicks, punches, but it never came out to more than that. They had us there for 15 days without toilet paper, without food some days, sometimes they would only give us rice and beans. We were blindfolded, and so they really mistreated us, and I with my boy so young, he was 1 at the time. I said to them, they would tell me to say the truth, to where I belonged, and so I would tell them, that I was in between the two sides, same as the Soviet Union and the USA. That was how I understood it, that I could not lean to one side because they would repress me, and if I went to the other side they would also repress me. So I said, damn, you will never improve. I would say to them, why don't we organize here in the police, and also the American *compañera* that they had in there would tell them — yeah, they had Jennifer Casolo — and she, because she was American,

they had her in a prettier room, and thank God the *compañera* felt at least better. And I say *compañera* because although she was not from El Salvador, but she identified herself more than some Salvadorans would. There are some foreigners who identify themselves more than some Salvadorans.

How did you come out of there?

From El Salvador?

No, from the police.

Well, because of the union. Finally I felt they had recognized me as one of them, and so we were 9 and they looked for a lawyer, and due to connections with the government, the same mafia of the government, they offered money to the judge and they took the 9 of us out. I do no know how much it was, whether it was 25,000 or 40,000 *colones*, so they paid and they let us out. And in some way I feel not guilty, but that I should be there with them because they did something for me, they did not just leave me in the jail for 10 or so years, like they have done with others who have stayed there. Then, my brother lives here in San Francisco, he called me, and a friend I have, they told me to leave, for my son, for his security, they lent me the money.

When you came out of the police, did they bother you?

No, because they took me to be in hiding. Yes, when I came out of there, religious groups gave me their hand in protecting me until the day I left. I came out of the police the 21st of December, and I left El Salvador to Guatemala December 26.

And your son?

[W]hen I got to Guatemala I got sick and I had to go to the hospital because it was so cold.

Who paid for the medical bills in Guatemala?

I, because I had some money with me, because a friend had lent me some money, 8,000 colones. She was an ex-coworker, not from the union. They did not want me to leave. They told me that I had to stay there to continue the struggle, even more so now. But I have a very young child and I have to take care of my son.

When you left El Salvador, did you make the decision or was it taken for you?

Well, in a way I had the pressure from my brother here, he wanted me to come, and I do not know I felt, I do not know how, because I had a son. I do not know, I wanted to stay. I would have done a lot more, but because there was a child in between . . . I thought that my duty as a mother was to educate him until he can defend himself. And if I had stayed I knew I could die, because there is persecution there. Every person's name that the police gets a hold of, they kill them, and I felt I could not stay. So it was basically my duty as a mother that made me make the decision to come.

How was your trip in Guatemala?

Well, in Guatemala the trip was fine because we knew this family who helped us a lot. Because when I went to church I met these people, although the priest in Guatemala told me they would help me, but I just went and stayed with the family instead. The people were very kind in Guatemala and in Mexico. In Mexico, I also stayed with people whom I met in the movement, people of solidarity with El Salvador, we were there for a week and then they drove us to the airport.

Did you meet any Salvadorans in Mexico?

Yes, there were many in Mexico, and they wanted to come, but they stayed there because they did not have the money to come here.

Sandra's brother, who had urged her to come to San Francisco, lived in a studio apartment and lacked the material resources to give her a place to live. Nevertheless, he pressured her to avoid contact with the San Francisco-based members of the movement in solidarity with the opposition in El Salvador who had helped her pass through Guatemala and Mexico. Sandra was suddenly thrown back upon her own resources for survival in San Francisco. Despite a limited knowledge of English, she has been forced to work long hours at low wages as a domestic servant, and to seek religious charity in order to survive. She describes her current situation:

So you came here because your brother lived here?

Yes, my brother lives here. But when we came we were surprised because he lives in a studio, with his wife and two kids, and . . . there was no place for us sleep. Then he said well, sister, I brought you here and now you have to work, and you have to work somewhere where you live in because there is no place for you in here. So that is how it was. I worked in for five months because he told me that there were programs to help people, but the important thing is that he did not want us to affiliate to the organizations here . . .

When did you arrive to San Francisco?

January 10, to San Francisco, and what I did was I enrolled in a school, but because I had to work in, I left the school because my boss told me they would not give me permission to continue. So what I have done now is to come out of that job and find another. Right now I am earning about $15 a day, and sometimes I only work three times a week, it is only enough to pay the room.

How many hours do you work?

Sometimes from 7:00 in the morning to 6:00 in the afternoon, but because one has no people to help us to find a job, or who would worry about finding information, so I have been coming here to CRECE [a charitable organization that distributes free food] for two weeks now, practically begging because that is the reality, you know.

In sum, following her arrest in El Salvador for her political activities, Sandra was urged to come to San Francisco by her brother who lived in the Mission District. Her journey was financed by a loan from a coworker who was not a member of her union, whose members had wanted her to stay. She received secure passage through the assistance of religious and political groups who sheltered her from the police until she left El

Salvador, and provided her with housing and other assistance while she traveled through Guatemala and Mexico. Once she arrived in San Francisco, however, Sandra was received by a brother who could not provide her with an initial place to live and who urged her to seek live-in work as a domestic servant. Because of pressure from her brother, she has not contacted any of the religious or political organizations that are part of the oppositional network that had previously assisted her.

Nor has Sandra sought any form of public assistance. She lacks basic knowledge of how social programs in California work. Sandra perceives government agencies in the U.S. as monolithic, uncaring, and unresponsive to Latinos. Instead, she plans to seek political asylum in Canada. Ironically, Sandra is aware that Canadian immigration authorities give priority to intact families. She worries that she may be excluded from asylum because she is a single mother with a son. Yet she is unaware that this household status is one of the only ones that may entitle her to such programs as Medi-Cal and WIC in California. Despite her overall high level of political awareness, Sandra does not differentiate between national- and state-level programs or policies in the United States. To her "the government" in California is the U.S. government, which she deems responsible for the violence and displacement in El Salvador.

The following exchanges resonate with Sandra's diminished sense of hope since she arrived in California:

If you were ill, who would you go to for help?

I do not know, here is very hard because if you go to the hospital, they send you a big bill. There is no help for Latins here, it is very hard, the government does not care, but it spends all this money in sending bombs.

If you had a financial problem where would you go?

Here it is impossible, because even if you go to the park to sleep they kick you out, there is no support in here.

If you were feeling lonely who would you go to?

Well, the reality is that those thing[s] should not even be of consideration. Here one must be strong because nobody helps you.

Finding Sanctuary: Armando's Story

In contrast, Armando became involved in the activities of the oppositional network only after he arrived in California. His story sheds light on the uses and limits of this politically organized form of social support in mediating the settlement of refugees from El Salvador. Armando is a 26-year-old Salvadoran who grew up in the San Jacinto Barrio of San Salvador. He was not actively involved in the opposition movement before he left El Salvador, nor was he a devout religious practitioner. During the course of his two-year journey to San Francisco, however, he learned about the assistance that both the religious organizations and the political networks affiliated with the sanctuary movement could provide. Although his decision to affiliate was made gradually, his involvement did not simply "evolve." It was initially part of a rationally calculated survival strategy that he had worked out more or less on his own as he interacted in different social milieus and acquired

more information about the options open to him. Armando's story is worth recounting because of his candor concerning his changing motivations and the clarity with which he describes the social organization of this support network.

Armando left El Salvador in 1985 rather suddenly, out of fear and with little preparation. His barrio had become an unlivable social space of violence and death produced largely by the actions of the established authorities. After telling our interviewer that he fled El Salvador out of fear, Armando was asked if he knew of others who would have done the same as he did but were unable to do so. He replied:

> The truth is that yes, the majority of the people around . . . mainly in the barrio where we lived . . . in that sector . . . there was a lot of abuse from the part of the authorities against the people, against the civil population, you see. . . . So people were hysterical, because all of a sudden there would be *toque de queda* [curfews], then shootings would start. . . . People would seek refuge in their houses, those who were near their houses, and those who weren't would just lay on the floor in the streets. . . . You would go out and see what had happened, and you may see a neighbor laying there, dead . . . images that would leave an impression on you . . .

Armando initially set out on his own to migrate to the Mission District, where his aunt and his sister lived. He tried to pay for his journey by himself by working temporarily at various odd jobs for two years while traveling through Guatemala, Belize, and Mexico. He experienced the most difficulty in Mexico, where he encountered culture shock, discrimination, a violent beating, and extortion by Mexican police officials. While in Mexico, Armando spoke infrequently because he feared his Salvadoran accent would reveal his nationality and subject him to more of the same. After once failing to cross the Mexican border to California, Armando decided that he could not make it on his own. A Salvadoran family whom he had met in Mexico City encouraged him to form connections with the political and religious groups constituting the sanctuary movement, which operates as a contemporary "underground railroad," assisting refugees from El Salvador and Guatemala in migrating to California, Texas, and other parts of the United States, and getting settled in their destinations.

In the following passages Armando recounts his initial discovery of this social support network in Mexico and his growing involvement in it once he arrived in the San Francisco Bay Area, largely thanks to the network's assistance.

And did you travel by yourself from El Salvador?

> I traveled by myself . . . but over here, in Mexico, I met this group who helped me. It was a group of students, but I didn't travel with them, they just gave me an idea of what I should expect farther ahead . . .

Were they Salvadoran?

> There were some Salvadorans, some Mexicans, some South Americans. It was a mixture of Latin culture, you see . . . who know the situation in my country. We communicated through a church, a church in Mexico City.

How did you contact the church?

I asked . . . like with everything else, you ask around. Asking for work, I ran into a Salvadoran family who told me about these meetings they had. They said our religion is progressive . . . and this and that. At that time I needed that type of connections, you see . . . in order to be able to go on with my trip. So I joined this group and that's how I met some *compas* [sympathizers or active members of the opposition in El Salvador] who had left El Salvador a while before I did . . . a year, a year and one half before I left. They were working there, at the university, at the UNAM [National Autonomous University of Mexico], and that's how I got to know this group of students. I lived there for a while. They gave me shelter, and in exchange I would offer my services in whatever capacity . . . cleaning . . . or if they rented the center they had for an event — because they had a huge center adjacent to the church — then you would have to arrange the chairs, organize the center . . . get the place ready for the events . . . to keep yourself active, you see. During the weekends, we used to have a sort of mass there . . . where we used to sing progressive songs, you see . . . and there were talks on conscientization. The truth is that I liked that group . . .

So when did you come here?

In 1987.

Have you moved since you've arrived here?

The truth is that I lived everywhere (laughing) . . . yes. Because, like I mentioned, when I came here I went over to my aunt's house. I was there for a while, and then I started to visit some organizations of Central Americans here in San Francisco — CISPES [Committee in Solidarity with the People of El Salvador], Casa El Salvador, and all of that. Through them I learned that there was a pacifist group in Concord. . . . I don't know if you have heard about Bryan Wilson and all those people . . . a man who had his legs cut off by the train . . . and all of that. So I talked to these people, with Cartagena [one of the project directors of the Central American refugee group], this friend who told me, 'Look, if you want, we can go there. This community can be useful for you, if you want to learn English, they can help you because . . . as an American community they have more options and more to help with than we Salvadorans do.' So I thought great, let's go there . . . and went. We fasted there for about a week. We fasted with [Bryan Wilson] and other Vietnam veterans who were fasting there, and there I started to meet other people and I stayed there for a while. I stayed there for a period of about two years. That is where I grew up in this country, with the ideas of nonviolence . . . of course, learning because I am a bit curious about new culture, new experiences. So they were my first professors in English, because they spoke to me. And sometimes I wouldn't understand anything they said to me.

Upon his arrival in the Bay area, Armando became increasingly active in the movement. Through his involvement, Armando received substantial material and social as well as emotional support. For example, he is currently living with an older Anglo member of the movement in the East Bay in exchange for helping to maintain the latter's house by

doing yard work, housecleaning, and home repairs. Other Anglo members of the movement have helped him to learn English, which he intends to improve at a language workshop at San Francisco City College, located near his aunt's house. Armando has been able to support himself by performing odd jobs for Anglo members of the oppositional network. In turn, he assists other Anglo members of the network, like his friend Mike, who need help in communicating with Salvadorans in Spanish. When asked to whom he would go for help if he got sick and had a financial or domestic problem, Armando states unhesitatingly: "First, I would run to my family and then to the community [his friends from the solidarity network] . . ."

Most of our Salvadoran refugee respondents belong to no local voluntary associations in the Bay Area, except perhaps an evangelical sect or a Catholic parish church. Armando, in contrast, has ties to individual members of the oppositional network, reenforced by his extensive associational affiliations with local community organizations. These associations and alternative cultural practices have become a meaningful part of Armando's everyday life. His attachment to the oppositional network, undertaken originally for instrumental reasons, has become both emotionally satisfying and inseparable from the way he now defines himself. Consider Armando's responses to the following questions about associational participation, to which most of our Salvadoran respondents simply said "No" or "None."

Do you participate in an association which is Salvadoran, Mexican, Latino?

Whenever I can, I go to Casa El Salvador to talk to the *compañeros* over there, to get some information on the situation, and sometimes with the Nicaraguan community, because over there in the railroad tracks in Concord I met some people. Their name is "Teachers For Peace." I also keep in touch with them. Whenever they have an event, I communicate with them, and ask them when they have their events . . . and I attend them. That is besides the Salvadoran community. They [Teachers For Peace] organize caravans and they take books . . . notebooks for the children in areas where the conflict is more intense.

In El Salvador?

No, this is in Nicaragua. . . . So, besides the Salvadoran community, I know this group that I like to become familiar with. I like their traditions. Yes, for instance "Palo de Mayo" [a Nicaraguan dance from the Atlantic coast] that I didn't know it existed . . . even though we are so close, right? It is a very emotionally charged dance . . .

Yes, it's beautiful . . .

Wow . . . it's just wonderful!

These organizations with which you keep in contact, are they organizations that deal with the recently arrived, or other immigrants? Who do they primarily serve?

Mostly they are for the community that is coming in, those who are arriving. For instance, I was a bit active with Carecen [an organization to help refugees from Central America], but that was at the beginning when I had just arrived here. They (the people at the railroad tracks) told me to go to Carecen. So I went to

Carecen to support them and help them with events. Mostly they do receive more recently arrived, people who come from the community-based organizations. There is another group, the Catholic Worker, which works out of Oakland. They have just initiated a committee named MOARC — Monsenior Oscar Arnulfo Romero Committee. The idea they have over here in Oakland, more specifically at the Catholic Worker, is to . . . . it was born out of the need to . . . in that area there were few organizations to deal with the refugees, and a lot of refugees, you see. So there was a need to create that . . . and it came out of that group, of course, being couched by the committee in San Francisco. So they are in Oakland with the idea of helping those refugees in Oakland. It's a fairly recent committee. It was started about four or five months ago. They have events, meetings and all of that, so I attend those. I am planning to serve one day as a volunteer there at the Catholic Worker, with the objective of obtaining food from them. They receive donations, so I would exchange my labor, like answering phones, or anything, for food.

This shows that Armando regards his involvement with the oppositional network as politically important and satisfying in other ways. Nevertheless, he is quite aware of its limits economically. It has enabled him to survive but not to become economically self-sufficient. The following excerpts make this clear:

Do you work?

Right now I get jobs through what these people get me . . . the people that I have met over there in Concord. As I mentioned to you, I ask them if they need anything . . . some paint job . . . the yard . . . clean the yard, and things like that. I was at the cooperative over here in San Francisco for a while, but that didn't work out right. There were too many people and too few jobs . . . which is the problem the community faces, the refugee community here. There are a lot of refugees trying to get jobs and the jobs are very few, and if there are jobs, the pay is a misery! And you need to earn even that miserable salary because there is no other way. So I started to turn to a short list that I made, to offer my services and to talk to them, and that's how I have been able to more or less support myself here economically. I have learned a little bit of everything.

So you don't have a secure job?

Exactly, no I don't . . . unfortunately I don't.

So how much do you more or less make when you do work?

In some cases, when things get really good, we could say I earn like . . . let's see . . . in a job, the maximum that I have made, moving furniture, was $100 a day, and that's been the maximum. Then other times maybe $30 or $40 a day — an average of $30 a day, and I work two or three days a week, sometimes. Sometimes I only work one day a week . . . it depends, like I told you.

His lack of economic self-sufficiency is the main reason Armando has decided to become less dependent on the oppositional support network. At the time of our interview he was planning to move in with his aunt, and enroll in the English language workshop at

San Francisco City College. Eventually, he hopes to gain admission to the community college as a full-time student.

FROM LITTLE STORIES TO BIG STORIES: STATE POLICIES FOR UNACKNOWLEDGED REFUGEES

The large-scale Salvadoran migration to San Francisco's Mission District throughout the 1980s and early 1990s is riddled with ironies and contradictions. The little stories we have just told reflect the larger story of the civil war in El Salvador as a refugee-generating process. All of the refugees we interviewed had directly experienced civil violence — in the countryside, in their villages, in urban middle- and working-class neighborhoods, even in once-secure, upper-class enclaves. Regardless of their social backgrounds or political ideologies, they fled El Salvador to escape the violence that threatened their lives and destroyed the basis of their livelihoods. Yet, because the United States government supported and financed the war in El Salvador, their status as refugees was not officially recognized. They were thus denied the economic, social, and medical assistance available to officially recognized refugee populations — Cubans, Afghanis, Southeast Asians, Soviet Jews — who fled from political regimes disapproved of by United States foreign policy makers.

The Salvadoran refugee population living in the United States is currently estimated to be somewhere between 900,000 and 1 million people, of a total population in El Salvador of just under 5 million. The refugees, constituting nearly 20 percent of El Salvador's population, have been drawn to a handful of large cities, most notably San Francisco and Los Angeles, whose combined population of Salvadoran refugees may account for as much as two-thirds of the total.

The people we interviewed came to San Francisco's Mission District either because they had been urged to do so by kin already living there, from whom they expected to receive informal economic and social support, or because the city's declared policy of sanctuary for Central American refugees helped shape its image as a hospitable setting for Salvadoran migrants. Yet, ironically, as we have seen, San Francisco's segmented, service-based economy and its astronomically high housing costs have combined to marginalize the very refugees its political culture promised to protect and support. Regardless of their past educational or occupational experiences, they have been required to work long hours for low wages, without benefits, in jobs like those held by José, the aspiring school teacher, who works as a busboy. This segmented labor-market structure, which channels undocumented migrants into low-paid service jobs, has severely strained the capacity of the Salvadoran social networks based on kinship ties, like José's, that had managed to survive the social divisions within and between households, like Alicia's, produced by the prolonged civil war. The deepening economic recession has made matters worse. Recall José's disappointment that his brother, who had sent enough remittances home in the early 1980s for the family to build a house in El Salvador, was economically marginalized in the 1990s by his continued limited income, mounting housing costs, and

the debts he had incurred to pay for his wife's pregnancy, because their restaurant jobs lacked private health care benefits.

The Salvadoran migration to California cities accelerated throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s, a period marked by worsening domestic economic conditions and a growing "compassion fatigue" for the state's new immigrant minorities. Politicians, looking for scapegoats for the state's declining economic performance, have frequently blamed immigrants and refugees for taking away jobs that actually disappeared as a result of a decade of economic and political restructuring characterized by labor market transformation, corporate consolidations and mergers, industrial relocation to offshore production sites, the declining performance of American firms in the changing global economy, the retrenchment of welfare spending, the end of the Cold War, and the attendant fiscal crises of the national, state, and local governments.

These larger changes reflect an erosion of the country's once-hegemonic position in the international political economy. American foreign and military policy toward El Salvador was, in part, an effort to maintain a once-dominant position in the international political-economic system by military means. Ironically, the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War have thrown into stark relief the excessive dependence of the California economy on a high level of military spending, predicated on a now-obsolete, bipolar model of international relations among states. More ironic still is the fact that the Salvadoran victims of that larger policy are now being blamed for creating the economic and political conditions that displaced them from their homeland and continue to marginalize them in ethnic enclaves in California's major metropolitan areas today.

As in the case of the other new migrant and refugee groups we have studied, the Salvadoran shadow population faces a number of major institutional and cultural barriers to the acquisition of the English language and related bicultural skills and understandings that might improve their individual and collective plight. For Salvadorans, the most important of these are: 1) the refugees' limited access to adequate bilingual programs and/or their inability to attend regularly scheduled bilingual classes because they work irregular and unpredictable hours; 2) their relegation to low-paid, irregular work in service-sector jobs, with few or no benefits, often in ethnic enclaves where little or no English is spoken at work; 3) their undocumented immigration status, which has had a chilling effect on their willingness to apply for the limited number of state social services to which they may be entitled, like the WIC program, because of fear of deportation. In recent years this has been reinforced by the Salvadoran refugees' vivid awareness of the extent of the dominant Anglo population's "compassion fatigue," as manifested in the widely reported backlash against the presence of Latino day laborers looking for work on street corners in California communities such as San Rafael and Fullerton.

The current climate of compassion fatigue has been fueled by the political rhetoric of those intent on blaming all of California's social and economic problems on new immigrants. In the case of Salvadoran refugees, this climate has been compounded by the widespread, mistaken belief that the announced peace settlement in El Salvador is likely to lead to a large-scale return migration in the near future. This is unlikely to occur soon, if at all, for several reasons. First, the United States government, facing mounting debts and fiscal crisis, is unlikely to provide the substantial foreign aid necessary to allow El

Salvador's war-torn economy to absorb all of those who have fled. Second, the current Salvadoran government has taken no steps to invite the migrants back, because the country's economy is now dependent on remittances from Salvadorans living in the United States for more than one-third of its total GNP. Third, the migrants themselves, as our followup interviews have made clear, are aware of the limited job opportunities in the war-ravaged economy they fled. Many also remain suspicious of the peace process, expressing doubt that it will lead to the full demobilization of such instruments of mass terror as the death squads, and to the full political incorporation of the former guerrilla opposition. Alicia, for example, feels that she and her children might still be in danger if she returned to her country because of the traumatic nature of her experience as a suspected guerrilla sympathizer.

In light of these circumstances, California policy makers can reasonably assume that the Salvadoran refugee population is a relatively enduring feature of the state's changing demographic and social structure. The acquisition of English language skills is perhaps the single most important priority voiced by our interviewees. While it is of course crucial to improve the Salvadoran refugees' access to effective ESL and other bilingual education programs, our findings suggest that unless the refugees have more direct contact and communication with English-speaking people both at work and in community-level social organizations, the language gains of formal schooling may be short-lived. Presently the work experiences open to Salvadoran refugees in the San Francisco Bay Area have been overly concentrated in monolingual ethnic enclaves or in jobs requiring little or no use of English, such as gardening, manual day labor, hotel housekeeping, baby-sitting. Only those of our subjects who have worked daily with English-speaking coworkers — like José, who accepts job discrimination in the short run in part because he is empowering himself in the long run by learning English — have significantly improved their language and cultural skills and are becoming effectively bilingual.

Our findings suggest that it is time for both social scientists and policy makers to stop romanticizing the new immigrant ethnic enclaves and the new immigrant entrepreneurs they generate. The people who work in these enclaves are often doubly disadvantaged by that experience: poorly paid in the present, and prevented from acquiring the English language skills necessary to improve their lot in the future. State policies to reduce the ethnic segmentation of labor markets in California — such as, across-the-board enforcement of antidiscrimination legislation in employment — are a necessary complement to any strategy for improving opportunities for learning English in formal educational settings. Such policies, while generally beneficial, may be especially helpful to Salvadoran refugees with professional or technical skills whose talents and potential contributions to the state's economy are currently being wasted as they remain underemployed in ethnic enclaves.

Among our Salvadoran subjects, participation in community organizations whose members include English-speaking Californians has been a second reliable pathway to acquiring English language skills. Armando's extensive involvement in the activities of Bay Area community organizations that are part of the sanctuary movement is a notable case in point. Other examples include several subjects who are active in either evangelical or Catholic church-based community organizations. Despite the effectiveness of such groups in facilitating English language acquisition, the vast majority of our subjects belong to no

such organizations. They remain "underground," fearing that open social participation in any formal institutions of American society might expose them to discovery by law enforcement agencies and deportation.

At present, some federally and state-financed social services aimed at new immigrants and refugees — including ESL and bilingual education, legalization, and food distribution programs — are "contracted out" to private religious, ethnic, or neighborhood-based community organizations. Our findings suggest that in making such contractual arrangements in the future, state officials should select community-based organizations that are the most likely to involve refugees in identifying their everyday experiences, needs, and concerns in organizational settings that include bilingual speakers but in which English is spoken regularly. This approach can provide the refugees with a means of overcoming fear, an opportunity to communicate informally in the language they are studying formally in community-based bilingual education classes, and a collective or group incentive to learn English in their residential communities. This informal approach to language acquisition, however, is likely to have a limited effect as long as national policies and enforcement mechanisms continue to discourage Salvadoran refugees from open involvement in American society by treating them as illegal or worthy of only temporary asylum. The people we interviewed saw both forms of treatment as tantamount to deportation to their homeland, a move that even those who would like to return see as an impossible choice.

Finally, state policymakers should not underestimate the traumatic effect that the 12-year-long civil war has had on California's Salvadoran refugees. Like Sandra, many of our interviewees experience recurring war-related flashbacks characteristic of post-traumatic stress disorder. The attendant emotional stresses produced by these memories continue to impede their attempts to resume a normal life. The stories told by Alicia, José, Sandra, and Armando vividly attest to the emotional force of those recollections. California's health care policies and eligibility criteria should acknowledge and address the psychological damage that the war in El Salvador has done to our state's heretofore unacknowledged refugees. To do less would be an exercise in denial.

Chapter 4

THE TWO MIGRATIONS FROM VIETNAM: VOICES OF DIFFERENCE

The migration of Southeast Asian refugees to California offers a pointed example of the social practices by which new ethnic minorities are shaping the emerging urban landscape. This settlement has created problems as well as opportunities within the Vietnamese migrant community. The practice of similar customs and traditions by both first- and second-wave migrants from Vietnam conceals real differences between their patterns of adaptation to American life. The diversity found in the Vietnamese community is often masked by the popular media's promotion of the Vietnamese as the contemporary model minority through images of strong family unity, children as valedictorians, and wildly successful businessmen, as well as by academic measures of their economic adjustment. In fact, discussing the Vietnamese by extrapolating from the backgrounds and experience of the most well-equipped, first-wave settlers tends to ignore the splits within and between first- and second-wave Vietnamese refugees, masking many adjustment problems, particularly among the second wave.

Our research, based on initial interviews with first-wave settlers in Sacramento, many of whom have become social service providers and active in the city's Vietnamese mutual assistance associations, and in-depth ethnographic interviews with Sacramento's second-wave settlers, reveals distinctive patterns with regard to resettlement practices, social service use, obtaining employment, and family transformations. Although the pressures of adjustment have been harsh for both groups, the variation in their responses and strategies must be viewed in the context of their diverse social backgrounds, their different experiences of exit from Vietnam, and the changing economic and political conditions they faced upon arrival in California.

FIRST- AND SECOND-WAVE VIETNAMESE RESETTLEMENT EXPERIENCES

After the fall of Saigon in 1975, many citizens throughout the United States became sponsors for what is now called the "first wave" of Vietnamese refugees. People in Sacramento were also involved in refugee resettlement efforts through such voluntary agencies as Catholic Social Services and Lutheran Social Services, which coordinated the efforts of local congregations and individual families. Thus, initially the character of Sacramento per se had little to do with attracting the first wave of refugees to the city; their settlement was channeled by willing organizational and individual sponsors. Sponsors were

the initial decisionmakers determining where the first wave of refugees settled. Since people are more familiar with housing availability near their own neighborhood, initial settlement was influenced largely by where sponsors lived. Proximity made it more convenient for sponsors to look after refugee families. The overall result was the scattering of refugees in areas of Sacramento with affordable housing where sponsors were prevalent.

In the case of these early Vietnamese refugees, we found two patterns of exit from their initial point of entry: relocation within Sacramento, and to another part of California. The first was prompted by feelings of isolation and alienation by the scattered refugees. After refugees became familiar enough with the United States, and began to reassess their situation independent of their sponsors, many chose to move. Those who were dissatisfied by their lack of contact with other Vietnamese began to move out to other neighborhoods where housing was affordable and such ethnic contact could be maintained. In addition, voluntary agencies, which encountered pressures from some of the refugees concerning their sense of isolation and alienation, sought to avoid such future pressures by channeling newly arriving refugees into neighborhoods with affordable housing, a recognizable Asian character, and easy access to Asian grocery stores. As a result, the Southside neighborhood of Sacramento became the major port of entry for future waves of Southeast Asian refugees.

The second form of exit, secondary migration, was chosen by those who left Sacramento for other areas in California that had come to have higher concentrations of Vietnamese, such as Santa Ana, San Jose, and San Francisco. Most studies attribute this secondary migration to the desire to unify families or join relatives and friends (Desbarats and Holland, 1983). An additional reason for leaving was the perception that job opportunities were better in larger metropolitan areas than in Sacramento. It should be noted, however, that this perception cuts both ways. Other Vietnamese refugees have come to Sacramento from other states, both to unify families and improve their economic chances.[1]

Beginning around 1980, due to the political situation in Indochina, a second wave of Southeast Asian refugees, often referred to as "boat people," began arriving in the United States. These refugees, many of whom were ethnic Chinese, often were less well educated, less urbanized, and had less contact with western culture than those who came to the United States in the first wave. By the time the boat people began to arrive, available housing in Sacramento's Southside area had become saturated and settlement began to spill over into "East City."

The following description, drawn from our interview with the Asian community liaison worker from the Sacramento County Department of Social Services, reveals the interplay of ethnically based social networks, the local media, and local government agencies in the migration of Southeast Asian refugees into the Lemon Hill area of East City:

> There was a farmer of Chinese ancestry who . . . sponsored . . . many ethnic Chinese who had farm experience. It became out of hand when . . . at one point

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[1] This statement applies to both waves of refugees discussed in this chapter, as well as to the Mien refugees discussed in Chapter 4.

there were about 34 people coming at one time from Camp Pendleton. He housed them in North Sacramento . . . in one-bedroom [units] . . . and the word somehow got out in the media that there were refugees living in infested apartments and the condition was . . . substandard. . . . What we [social services] did was, with the cooperation of the person who sponsored them, relocated them [to] Lemon Hill because they had larger three- and four-bedroom apartments. From that process . . . through word-of-mouth or family unification, more ethnic Chinese . . . resettled in the area.

Elaborating on the "word-of-mouth or family unification" process, another informant describes a unique form of community mobilization and collective action by which the refugees themselves wrested the initiative from official sponsors and resettlement agencies.

When we first settled these people, they were making all kinds of phone calls all over the United States . . . trying to get in touch with people. . . . They were making long distance phone calls and you should have seen the . . . bills they ran up. I couldn't believe it. . . . They were paying for it out of their own welfare checks or whatever resources they had. Unfortunately, some [phones] were disconnected because some couldn't afford to pay the bill. But this [constituted] emotional support they were looking for, in the sense of family and relatives, and friends of the same village.

As a result of this successful reestablishment of their social network, the few large apartment complexes along Lemon Hill Avenue became occupied almost entirely by second-wave refugees. As these complexes filled with refugees, who in turn sponsored relatives, they sought housing in the adjacent areas of East City and South Sacramento to accommodate the overflow. The East City/Lemon Hill area has thus become an enclave for newly arriving refugees from Vietnam and other parts of Southeast Asia, as well as for secondary migrants who moved to Sacramento from other areas of the United States.

Because of the previous lack of Asian businesses in Lemon Hill to serve this growing population, an increasing number of refugee-owned commercial enterprises have been established there. This pattern of neighborhood development contrasts sharply with that of the Southside, in downtown Sacramento, whose preexisting commercial infrastructure had attracted the refugees. Although Southeast Asians did create some commercial services of their own in the Southside, the overall pattern was to rely on existing Asian businesses to meet their needs. In the Lemon Hill area, where no household services existed, the refugees themselves created them. The difference between the Southside and Lemon Hill neighborhoods indicates two contrasting patterns of survival among refugees. The former utilizes resources within an existing Asian neighborhood, while the latter creates new ones where none previously existed.

Finding Employment and Using Social Services: Patterns of Difference

The patterns of finding employment also differ between first- and second-wave Vietnamese refugees. With the crisis created by the fall of Saigon in 1975, voluntary

agencies under contract grants from the U.S. State Department resettled refugees through sponsors on a hit-or-miss basis. As there were no specific U.S. programs for first-wave Vietnamese refugees (Knoll, 1982), the nature and quality of their experience rested on the resources, abilities, and ingenuity of the agencies and the refugees' sponsors.

A specific example is provided by one of our informants, an early first-wave Vietnamese refugee woman:

> We were sponsored by a church. They provided information, and took us to apply for Medi-Cal, but they didn't mention anything about welfare because they [were] not very supportive of that in that era. . . . They tried to help us get a job. . . . They gave us advice to get a training job [OJT] or a job. It was not really a good job, because we did not speak English very well at that time, and our background could not fit into the new society. So at that time everybody had to start from the bottom.
>
> They sent women to be manicurists, a training job for a few months. Then you looked for a job. . . . [Others] . . . tried to get jobs such as gardening, or working in a restaurant or hotel. . . . It's really a labor job, for minimum pay. But most of us accept it just to prove we want to work. . . . We work part-time and go to school part-time, and after a couple of years, when our kids finished two years college, we moved.
>
> I was working as a manicurist part-time and going to school [community college] part-time. I would go to school in the morning and work a couple of hours and on Saturday and Sunday and try to survive. My husband [a former government official] went to school full-time and worked half-time in a hospital as a nurse aide. You can tell how hard it was with a job like that . . .
>
> I was a teacher for 12 years in elementary school in Vietnam. When I came here I thought that I want to be a teacher. But somebody said that at that time, oh, there are so many unemployed people in that field, I think with my broken English I couldn't teach anybody. . . . I think the people who advised me at that time were wrong, 'cause we can help our people as a bilingual teacher . . . So I just go to school and learn in general education and learned English. I had no idea what type of job I'm going [in]to.

This woman worked as a teacher's aide for two years and then began training with the Southeast Asian Mental Health Training Programs at the University of California, Davis, Medical Center in Sacramento. After completing the program for a community mental health worker, she became involved with the Indo-Chinese Assistance Center, a nonprofit program of the Interfaith Service Bureau, and eventually became the center's director.

This interviewee believes her experience is typical of the first wave of Vietnamese refugees, though the specifics may differ. Lack of English language ability stands out as the most difficult barrier to securing meaningful employment. Initially, assistance from voluntary sponsors helped Vietnamese refugees find "labor jobs" to survive. After that, the refugees used primarily their own initiative to learn English and acquire further education. When more systematically planned refugee programs were developed, many took advantage by upgrading qualifications and moved into more meaningful jobs.

Without a preexisting community network or systematic resettlement program, first-wave refugees initially relied on assistance from sponsors in the broader community. Then they used their own initiative and resources to carve out a relatively successful survival strategy. Although their occupational skills from Vietnam were not immediately transferable, many first-wave refugees, after developing a functional command of the English language, were eventually able to adapt their abilities and skills to jobs where there was some carryover. For example, many first-wave Vietnamese men were administrative officials in the government or military who tended to avoid unskilled, physical labor, or accepted such jobs only temporarily. After completing a job training program they moved into office work, most commonly in government agencies. Their relatively high educational and occupational backgrounds, plus their familiarity with urban living and exposure to Western culture, undoubtedly contributed to their relatively successful adaptation. These findings are consistent with other studies indicating relatively high self-sufficiency among the first wave of Vietnamese refugees (see Hahn, 1982).

The situation for the second-wave "boat people" is quite different. As a whole they are a diverse lot, including Vietnamese farmers and fishermen, Laotian highlanders, Cambodian refugees, and ethnic Chinese, many of whom were independent, small business people from North Vietnam. All of these groups experienced the chaotic political and economic conditions of postwar Southeast Asia. Some were less educated, financially less well-off and from rural areas, and they had little exposure to Western culture or a technical and urbanized way of life. Others, while educated and urbanized, had spent extensive time in reeducation camps. In both cases, the conditions of their escape left the second-wave refugees with few financial resources, deep emotional scars and, in many more ways, less prepared than those in the first wave to make an easy transition to life in the United States.

In further contrast with the experiences of first-wave refugees, by the time the second wave began to arrive, the U.S. Congress had passed the Refugee Act of 1980, which created specific programs to assist in resettlement. Under this act, sponsors sent refugees to welfare departments, which in turn referred them to other agencies. Provided with short-term cash assistance and Medi-Cal, they were required to enroll in ESL classes and job training programs run by the local school district. They were generally placed in minimum-wage, low-skilled jobs in restaurants, hotels, warehouses, car washes, and offices through the state Employment Development Department. Younger, more promising, refugees have tended to pursue more-extensive job training programs to find jobs as car mechanics, body shop workers, and in other higher-skilled areas such as electronics.

The Vietnamese refugees we interviewed are part of the most recently arrived second wave, who came to the U.S. from 1989 onward. The majority arrived through Vietnam's Orderly Departure Program after their U.S. sponsorship was approved. For some, the process took as long as 10 years. Half of our respondents spent at least six months in a refugee camp in Thailand, Hong Kong, or the Philippines before arriving in the United States. One-quarter of the people we interviewed escaped from Vietnam by boat with part of their families, spent up to a year in Southeast Asian refugee camps, and then were processed in the Philippines before arriving in the United States. One-third of the individuals arriving through the Orderly Departure Program repeatedly tried to escape

Vietnam by boat before their sponsorship was approved. One of our subjects attempted to escape at least 20 times.

Upon arriving in Sacramento, second-wave settlers relied on a combination of resources for initial survival, including help from their sponsors, social assistance programs, and some informal employment, usually in a friend's ethnic business. Currently, sponsors generally are members of the immediate family, such as a sibling, son or daughter, or parent. Sponsors often helped our interviewees locate or share their housing, introduced them, with the help of Catholic or Lutheran Social Services, to assistance programs, and generally oriented them to day-to-day living. As several of the people we interviewed were classified as economic immigrants, they were ineligible for public assistance and relied on their sponsors for loans for initial survival.

The women and men in our study, like earlier second-wave settlers, relied heavily on the social assistance programs available to them for initial survival. Assistance (limited to one year at the time of interview, and now limited to eight months), has included cash payments, food stamps, and Medi-Cal, and requires newcomers to enroll in ESL classes and job training programs if available. All but two of our respondents were enrolled in ESL classes, viewing the ability to speak English as the essential requirement for adjusting and locating a good job.

The necessity of social assistance for second-wave Vietnamese becomes obvious when one considers the context of their immigration: arrival in a culture so different from their own, through traumatic conditions of escape and/or virtual imprisonment in reeducation and refugee camps. Given the difficulty of obtaining basic language and job skills within a year, and the state's deep and protracted recession, it was not surprising that the majority of the men we interviewed remained unemployed after the first year in California. Finding employment was especially difficult for the self-described middle-age (40s) and older (50s) men. Many of the women we interviewed, while studying English, began to find informal and formal employment in cosmetology and small ethnic businesses where proficient English was not required. In addition to relying on the women's work to support their families, parents relied equally heavily on the earnings of their children's after-school and work-study jobs for initial survival.

The general picture that emerged from our interviews is that these second-wave Vietnamese settlers in Sacramento tend to be isolated not only from the mainstream society, but from first-wave settlers in their own community. For example, we found surprisingly little use of, or involvement by, second-wave refugees in established local Vietnamese associations and the services they offer. The differences in the backgrounds between second- and first-wave settlers, stemming from the vast regional differences found in Vietnam as well as from economic, social, and ethnic factors, often made it difficult for second-wave refugees to relate to first-wave settlers. Understandably, given the political conditions of Vietnam, the second-wave often displayed a distrust of the former government officials found in the first wave, who tend to dominate and run Vietnamese associations and clubs. Perhaps most significant, according to one of our informants, an active Vietnamese community member and social worker, first-wave settlers running the Sacramento Vietnamese associations tend to lose sight of, or are out of touch with, the concerns and problems facing the majority community of second-wave refugees, not least of which are

problems confronting youth in attempting to figure out what it means to be both Vietnamese and American. Lack of knowledge about and/or inability to identify with the perceived purpose and interests of Vietnamese associations has contributed to the newcomers' lack of participation in the formal social networks created by first-wave refugees, further increasing their isolation.

Part of the isolation experienced by second-wave settlers may be attributed to the nature of the Sacramento community as well. Although many second-wave immigrants settled in the Lemon Hill neighborhood of South Sacramento, there is no overarching Vietnamese organization or even industry, such as electronics in San Jose, California, binding them together. If second-wave immigrants have participated in formal networks only minimally, their creation and use of informal networks is also weak. The majority of our respondents reported that they do not know their neighbors, whether Asian or Anglo, except for passing hellos. When asked if he knew his neighbors, one second-wave Vietnamese settler gave a typical response:

> No. I usually just greet or nod at them. They have black hair, [meaning they are Asian], but I do not know their nationality. I also know other Americans who live in the area, but not very well.

The pattern that emerged for second-wave settlers in Sacramento is an extreme reliance on the immediate family in its various stages of construction, as many families are only now being unified through the Orderly Departure Program, and on government services to which they are entitled. These services are sorely inadequate, as federally funded refugee aid is now limited to eight months, in comparison to the 18 months of benefits available to most first-wave refugees. Pressures for survival may worsen if proposed cutbacks of benefits to four months succeed in the legislative process. Thus, older parents tended to supplement welfare with informal work in jobs for which English speaking ability is not essential, such as gardening, restaurant work, sewing, and cosmetology. Parents placed their hopes for success on their children. After initially receiving welfare, the children in our sample located jobs to put themselves through school and contribute to the family income. This heavy reliance on familial networks is placing a strain on relations within the Vietnamese family, as well as on youth in the process of defining themselves and making choices in the wider society.

The stories of two of our subjects, Huu and Nhan, convey the complex and varied survival process of the most recent second-wave settlers. These stories of ordinary people who found themselves in extraordinary circumstances speak to their courage, resilience, and diligence in adjusting to a strange new culture they never had intended to embrace. Huu's story illuminates the difficulties encountered by an older man in finding employment to support his family here, while desperately trying to assist relatives who remain in his beloved Vietnam. The stoic optimism and incessant hard work depicted by Nhan illustrate the expanded role of Vietnamese women in the U.S. in providing essential support for their families' survival and well-being.

Between Two Worlds: Huu's Story

After spending 7½ months in a refugee camp in the Philippines, 57-year-old Huu arrived in the U.S. in 1989 with his wife and five children. They came directly to Sacramento, where Huu's sponsor, a cousin, resides. Qualifying for refugee status, Huu's family was eligible for refugee assistance for the first year after arrival. Since then, Huu, his wife, and youngest daughter have collected AFDC, food stamps, and Medi-Cal. Currently unemployed, Huu attends a local city college studying English, math, and French to prepare himself for locating some type of employment. Huu's wife studies English and has recently completed a job training course in food preparation, but has been unable to find a job.

To comprehend the difficulties Huu faces in adjusting to U.S. society, one must contrast his life here to life in Vietnam. Although Huu's situation has changed dramatically since arriving in the U.S., the process began in Vietnam when life altered radically after the 1975 Communist takeover. Prior to 1975, Huu and his family lived in Da Nang, a cosmopolitan, seaside city filled with commerce, merchants, banks, theaters, and entertainment. It was also the home of major air and naval bases and strategic military installations. In describing his city, Huu recalled a popular saying in Vietnam: "If you don't live in Saigon, you will feel the same atmosphere if you live in Da Nang."

Huu's parents owned a small business as well as some farmland which they allowed others to farm for a percentage of the harvest. Huu recalled his childhood as a time of being "very happy and peaceful." While attending Hue University, he taught math, chemistry, and physics in Da Nang. Later, he joined the army and became an instructor in the technical training office and also worked in job placement for disabled veterans. Marrying his wife, a teacher, in 1964, Huu described their standard of living as typical of a government official, "not too luxurious but rather comfortable."

Life changed dramatically for Huu and his family after 1975. Typical of the husbands and fathers in our study, Huu was sent to reeducation camp for former government officers. He described the conditions of his camp, located 40 kilometers from Da Nang, believing them to be better than most:

> It was the same for everybody. We went to the forest to cut and collect trees or do farm work, or went deeply into the forests to collect a type of climbing plant for the communist government for marketing, or collect a kind of tall grass which [one] can use to build houses. They, the communist government, took advantage of our labor. The works varied from camps to camps and it depends on the communist officer who is in charge of the camp. If you are lucky enough to have a communist guard who is not too severe or strict, then your life will be easier. The works in the camp also varied depending on your age and health . . . and they often asked for volunteers to work on heavy job. We were all in the same boat, so we cared for each other. The young and "still-strong" officer were often volunteer to do the heavy work. The condition reeducation camp where I stayed was much better in comparing to other camps.

How far away from Da Nang?

About 40 kilometers. But it was very difficult to get here. Normally, all the reeducation camps [were] located in the dangerous and full of obstacles area. Visitors have to pass many rivers. Thu Bon River in Da Nang was . . . very deep and dangerous. There were many visitors had died due to the flood.

According to the men and women in our study, families were permitted to visit the camps approximately twice every six months. Huu's wife could visit only once every four or five months because of her responsibility supporting the entire family left behind in Da Nang. Although many married Vietnamese women in urban areas like Saigon and Da Nang previously had small businesses or sold petty commodities in the market, these activities supplemented their husband's income. After 1975, they were thrust in the role of primary supporter of their families while their husbands were imprisoned, in addition to becoming the formal authority figure, a role previously held by their husbands. In recounting his wife's struggle to support the family, Huu described not only how his wife's role had changed while he was in camp, but his dramatically altered status when he returned to the family:

My wife was a teacher at a nearby high school and my family used to have a small stationery and school supplies shop near school. After I left for the camp, my wife sold all the things in the shop gradually to support our family because her salary from teaching alone couldn't support our family. Then there was the time she started to sell things in the house to get some money to support the family day by day. After I got home, there were few things left like a scooter, TV, and other less valuable things. During that time, I was still under the control of the local police and I was not allow to work on any forbidden job like photographer, coffee shop, or barber, or any kind of work in which I needed to make contact with the public. Therefore I wasn't able to work during that time to help out my family. So I started to learn how to sew by myself . . . from the book and I made clothes for neighbors to get some money. I made very little money because there were many tailors in the town and there were competition. The labor cost for a shirt and a pant (look like a pajama) was very low . . . about one and a half Vietnam *piaster* [VN dollar]. Later on I learned how to make dresses, shirts, and slacks and became a "real" tailor. I also made hat, purse, handbag etc. . . . and anything which involving sewing skill for extra money.

How was the family's living situation then?

I sewed but still didn't make enough for a living. So I continued to sell things in the house like the scooter, TV, my parents' [2] houses and their farm. My mother was still living during that time and she was over 70 year old. I sold the properties with her consent. I asked her for ideas and permission and she told me that if I need to sell them, then do so. Since I planned not to move back to the farm, so I sold the two houses and the farm. And in 1978, I sold my house in the Da Nang and moved to Vinh Long to live. During that time, the communism forced all the family of those who worked for the old regime and family of those who were still in the reeducation camp to move the new economic zone. We did

not want to go so I moved out of Da Nang. At that time, there was a rumor that if there were war in the North, the communist will move the government into Quang Nam, Da Nang and every family of those who worked for the old regime has to move out of the Da Nang City. So I move to Vinh Long on 1978 and until 1988 I came to U.S. . . .

How was your living like in Vinh Long?

It was very miserable and hardship. It was much worse than when I was in Da Nang. Because we had little income from my wife and me and things we sold from the house. Then I moved to Vinh Long. After I finished building a house, I only had one thousand [Vietnamese] dollars left. As the time went on, our life was more stable than during the time we first moved in. My wife applied for teaching job at a high school and I continued with my "sewing career." All of our children were very young, my income from sewing was low and my wife income was no different also . . . thus our life was very miserable. I worked on one more job as "candyman." I sold a type of Vietnamese candy cane which I made them myself. I learned how to make candy cane from sugar and put peanuts inside. . . . I sold candy in the afternoon at a bus station [Bac My Thuan]. In the morning, I went out and bought some sugar and peanut and made candy. Then about 10:00 I went out to sell candy until dawn. Still, I did not make enough money to support my family. A year later my wife started "small merchant" business. She taught in the afternoon and sold things at the market in the early morning . . . about from 4:00 to 5:00 a.m. to about 10:00 or 11 a.m.

Were your children able to go to school at that time?

Yes, I was managed to allow them to go to school, but when they reached to 12 grade, they were not allow to go to the university because of my background, even though they were excellent students. They were called by the government for "army duties" and "labor duties." Men and women from 18 to 28 had to go to work unpaid for a period of time — a year or so on the assigned job like carrying rock to build bridge, which was used to transport by machine before April 1975. Now they took advantage of human labor. My older children went for what they called "labor duties" for [four years]. When the "mission" was completed and fortunately it was the time we got ready to leave to U.S.

Since arriving in Sacramento, Huu and his family have actively tried to adjust to the U.S. through a combination of means, including education, work, and social assistance. Studying English, French, and math, Huu views education as the primary tool for learning about and surviving in his new society, a deeply held value transferred from his culture:

[B]ecause I just come here not so long ago I want to save all the energy I have for education, for school. . . . When we live in the country which doesn't speak our language, we need to strike as hard as we can to learn everything in order to live in that country. Beside, learning new language is the good thing to do . . . like right now, I also review my French in my spare time. . . .

I like education . . . I think it is the best in the world. The first time when I came to the library, I fell in love with the library. . . . I couldn't imagine . . . I

have talked to my friends in Europe and after making some comparison, I think nowhere in the world would provide student a better education than in the America.

Although diligently pursuing his studies to prepare himself for employment, in addition to his wife's job retraining, Huu is fairly realistic about his chances of finding a job at age 60. Moreover, Huu is aware that he is handicapped further by the economic recession he faced on arrival, hindering the adjustment of second-wave settlers:

> I am 60 years old, therefore nobody want me for just any kind of jobs. I did try to look for a job myself but unsuccessfully. My wife is 40 year old and she is middle age, and it is hard for her to find a job without experience. She received the training on food preparation. . . . She learned to make cakes in Philippine. I feel that it is easier for the Vietnamese people to find a job about three to five years ago. It is more difficult for the newcomers to find a job. . . . Especially for the people at my age . . . it is hard for me to fit into any type of job at my age. . . . Many of them are disappointed due to this. It is much better for those who is 65 or older because they are able to receive the social security assistance. It is not the $360 assistance that I wanted, but it is because we weren't able to find a job. I want to go to work and I enjoy working . . . and I want to work until 69 or 70 year old before I retire . . . so, it is very difficult for Vietnamese people who is between 50 and 65 year old.

Currently, Huu and his family support themselves with AFDC and food stamps, the earnings from a younger child's part-time job, and the work-study earnings of their four oldest children attending college. Their total family income from these sources is approximately $2,000 a month for a family of seven. Living very frugally and according to a Vietnamese saying, "I must live within my capacity," their income must cover a $650 house rental payment, car insurance and maintenance, gas, food, sundries, utilities, and any other unexpected expenses.

Typical of many of the middle-age and older parents in our study, Huu relies on the financial contributions of his children as they put themselves through school. Until they graduate and find employment, however, he has relied most greatly on social assistance. Because of Huu's difficulty in locating employment, he views AFDC as the most essential service because it continues for more than a year, enabling him to survive.

Although Huu continually expressed his gratitude to the U.S. government for the assistance he is eligible for, his dependence on welfare has resulted in internal conflict and feelings of self-reprobation as he struggles with his need for assistance and his desire and need for self-sufficiency. Describing his resulting "inferiority complex," Huu expressed a wish for greater solidarity within the Vietnamese community, hinting at the differences between the concerns of many first-wave settlers and newcomers:

> [D]eep down inside, every time I use the food stamp to go to buy food at the supermarket, my inferior complex bother me a lot. Before, I didn't pay any attention . . . so I used the food stamp anywhere . . . at the Vietnamese grocery store or at the supermarket without having to think about anything. Now I avoid bringing the food stamp to the supermarket to buy food. They are not discriminat-

ing me or showing any behavior that bothering me . . . but it is just me, I am feeling bad inside. . . . I also suggest my new comer friends not to use the food stamps at the supermarket or at any other American store. The food stamps are enough to use in 30 day so I can use them at the Vietnamese grocery stores or at the Chinese grocery stores. When I use the food stamps at the American grocery store and when I hand the clerk the food stamp, I just feel that the food stamp money is a favor and I am the "implorer." I am not a handicap — and I still have both of my arms. . . . I feel ashamed to be a "beggar" even though the American are very nice and we should beholden to them and show our respectful. Some of the Vietnamese sometimes are complaint about the "American" . . . but for myself, I feel the "American" are very nice to me. I have inferior complex even when receive a paper or a note from the welfare department. I wish the Vietnamese people here would pay more attention to the Vietnamese community here.

Huu's experience of dependence and consequent inner turmoil has resulted in very mixed feelings toward welfare, which were typical of many women and men we interviewed. Although Huu views assistance as more a privilege than an entitlement, and realizes it's a necessity for Vietnamese refugees and immigrants in adjusting to a culture so different from their own, he also feels that eligibility has prolonged dependency in some cases. Thus he argues for the need for newcomers to work to enable self-sufficiency and boost self-esteem, an attitude that echoes the American mainstream view of welfare:

After living here for sometime, I changed my point of view. . . . Most refugee or immigrant people will need about one year to learn English and adjust the living condition, and to adapt to the new environment . . . and they will better [off] by having a job. There are many advantages when they have a job. The first advantage is they will have more money to spend and have an opportunity to help their relatives in Vietnam. And they will be able to receive the retirement assistance when they are retired, . . . which is simple and easier than the social security assistance for old people.

. . . I heard that the American are respect the Japanese . . . because all the Japanese immigrants never applied for any type of assistance in America. The Japanese immigrant has avoid to be a burden of the American. I am not saying that the Vietnamese people should not apply for the assistance because that is impossible . . . then they don't have anything to live on since they don't have any type of experiences . . . but they should have at least reduced the length of the time receiving the assistance. It is the shame for the Vietnamese people if they keep living on welfare. I feel that some of them are trying to lengthen the time of receiving the assistance. . . . I hear that some of the Vietnamese who came on 1975 are still on welfare. I think that the law for welfare . . . the assistance is not for Vietnamese . . . but it is for the American themself . . . and the Vietnamese people have the luck to have the equal right to receive the assistance . . . and they should take advantage of the assistance to strike for a better living like going to school or being on a job training. . . . The "prepare" time and the "learning" period here in the America with the help of the welfare assistance have caused some of them to become "lazy" to search for "suitable" future. All of the jobs here

required people to have experience. All of us [have never been able] to work in America . . . how could we have some type of experience? . . . and many of them got discourage . . . and they have nothing to do and they lengthen the time receiving the assistance. We all don't want to be a beggar or to live on welfare. . . . We will be much better to spend on the money we earned. . . . We will be able to feel the real value of the money without any feeling of inferior complex.

Huu's view of the future remains optimistic, however, primarily because he places his hopes on his children's adjustment and success. Not surprisingly, he views the educational system and its resulting opportunities as the crucial means of enabling his children's eventual success. Although he extols the education system as the best in the world, Huu expressed concern for what he views as the excessive freedom available to youth in the U.S., which pervades even their school performance:

> [T]he education system here in the U.S., you just can't ask for more. But I feel it is too much freedom here . . . I mean too much! and I see that the students here are treating their professor more less like a friend — or better . . . a brother. . . . It is not like when we are in Vietnam when the teacher is the same level as your parents and you must show them respect as you did to your parents. However, you just can't expect it like we are in Vietnam because it is impossible . . . because "when in America, do as the Americans do. . . . " We can always supplement to what the school has left out during the process of educating young children. . . . I just can't expect too much.

Huu's concern for his children was universally expressed by the Vietnamese in our study. When asked whether it is more difficult to raise children in the U.S. than in Vietnam, Huu responded with an overwhelming yes, detailing the cultural and environmental elements to which youth are exposed and his subsequent lack of control over his children's behavior:

> Before I come here, I has a wish that my children will finish their education and become good citizens. But after one year, I has change my idea due to many of the complication of the living here. There are crimes and bad things around here like video game, TV. . . . There is TV in Vietnam also, but the programs are very carefully chosen. There are minimum of sexual and violent scenes. In the U.S., TV and films show many sexual and violent scenes, thus they affect greatly on children. And children spend lots of time in front of the TV. I means if five of my children live in Vietnam before the 1975 period and with my guideline, I believe that they all succeed in their education, or at least they would finish college. But after one year, I start to see thing differently . . . right now I don't see any evidence that my children would become bad or something, but by the way I look into the society, I can predict my children future. . . . I feel that bringing my five children to the United State won't guarantee me that they will be able to finish their education. For instance, two of my children due to the effect of the environment, they seem can't control themself and I cannot control or guide them either, and probably they will become bad. . . . Right now I still have the ability to guide and to educate them but I really don't know about the future. And

my children still retain many good personalities and able to control themself. But is very difficult. It is a dangerous society because it is too much freedom. They can fall anytime and their future will be ruin and that scares me.

Coping with the conflict between the openness of his new society and filial respect and the authority of his traditional parental role, Huu disclosed that he has had to readjust the way he educates his children. Drawing upon the importance of the extended family in Vietnam in supervising children, Huu broadens this value in the U.S. by calling upon the wider Vietnamese-American community to assist him in guiding his children:

> In Vietnam before 1975, the environment and society allow parents have the maximum power to control their children. But in U.S. because of the major effect of the environment and friends therefore I change the way which I used to educate my children. Beside me and my wife, I also need help and support from my relatives and friends and my children's friends. I want to say that I want my relatives, my friends, my children's friends to help me to educate and guide my children. I want my children's friends to have an effect on my children. Of course, I try my best to prevent and keep my children from bad friends. I try everything to eliminate and isolate the bad friends and pull my children to good friends. I try to get to know good kids and introduce to my children. For example, my family now have many good friends of my children who come from UC Davis and they come to visit very often. When I have a chance to meet a good kid with good family background and educated, I often invited him or her to my house to meet my children. I also want my children to get to know their teachers and respect their teachers. I don't like the idea or the way the children here in the U.S. criticize their teachers. I always told my kids that they are students and they have responsibility to respect their teachers. They are not suppose to criticize their teachers. . . . They are too young to criticize someone who older than them and their judgment can be wrong. . . . I try my best to make my children to respect and to love their teachers and to have many good friends. For example, there are some of my children friends who came here long time ago . . . seven or nine years ago and they are high school graduate but not going for a higher education like college or so. . . . I do my best to keep my children away from those kids. I'm sorry but . . . It doesn't mean that I want to isolate them but I try my best to prevent my children from becoming so close to those kids. I believe that we can be friend to everybody and everybody is our friend. But I choose the best kids or good kids to be my children best friends.

Realizing the strength of familial and community assistance rooted in his culture, Huu is fairly realistic about the effort required for adjustment, limiting the time and resources available for others. He is also personally aware of the difficulties faced particularly by second-wave settlers and their atomization, and wistfully compares the relations between relatives in the U.S. and in Vietnam:

> To tell you the truth . . . the relatives' "love" here couldn't be compare to the one we have in Vietnam. Of course, that they don't have time to talk to you and everyone is so busy. In Vietnam, we keep a close relationship and we share

a lots. They come to you no matter how far away you are. But for here, if you lucky, probably they call to talk to you for few minutes.

As an older refugee, moreover, Huu has deep emotional ties to Vietnam, where the majority of his life has been lived and his connection has been sustained through remaining relatives and friends. Huu wants to adjust successfully in the U.S. not only for him and his family, but for those in Vietnam who rely on the assistance provided by U.S. relatives. Describing the often inaccurate perception held by Vietnamese of quick affluence in the U.S., Huu nearly despairs in his inability to support his relatives there while struggling for survival here:

> I feel terrible inside because I received many letters from them. You know that a hundred letters from Vietnam all have the same content and purpose. They put their hope on you to help them. Many people in Vietnam misunderstood about the living condition here in the U.S. They don't know in U.S. who will make a lot of money . . . but they just look at the families who have family member who live in the U.S. . . . families who have children living in U.S. all receive presents and supplies very often and they show off to other. They share letters to neighbors, and in that letter — probably the same for every letter from America — they tell their family not to worry about anything, they will send money home for the family, just enjoy and spend money . . . and don't worry. It is funny that somehow I have the same thought as those people in Vietnam. I thought that when I get here, anybody can make money because I look at some families who couldn't compare to mine, not only education . . . I mean that there are some people better than you and some lower than you. . . . I didn't understand how it happen that only few months after they left Vietnam, their family become better . . . I mean better . . . in luxury. Therefore I misunderstand, but I understood better when I live here to the U.S. So every time I receive a letter, I feel terrible inside. I always think of way to make money to send back home to help my relatives and friends . . .
>
> So there is a problem . . . a big problem for those who have relatives in Vietnam. I don't know how to solve the problem myself. . . . So every time I receive a letter from someone in from Vietnam who really need help, I share the letter to other relatives who have been living here long . . . since 1975 or so . . . I asked if they could put money together to help the people in Vietnam. Like yesterday, I showed my brother a letter from Vietnam and he put in $20 to help out. The amount is not much but when we combine it with the money from others then it would make a bit different. My nephew gave me $50, and $20 from my brother plus my share and my children share . . . would make up about $100. My nephew in Vietnam is the one who needed help. He is the Vietnamese literature teacher in high school in Vietnam and he had his B.S. in literature. His 6-year-old and 8-year-old already quit school because he can't afforded the fee, and other materials. Everyone thought that his family will live on rice porridge soon [in Vietnam, the people who live on rice porridge are considered very poor]. The bad thing is that every person in my family is in school, so we couldn't afford to help

our relatives and friends in Vietnam. I have think of many ways to help them out but I just don't know how.

Successful adjustment in the U.S. for Huu thus embodies multiple levels of material, social, and symbolic meanings and goals. Education, self-development, training, and the financial rewards of work should not only be viewed as necessary for advancing in one's new country, but as representing one's pride in, identity with, and hope for Vietnam. Whether feasible or not, Huu's dream of someday returning to Vietnam seems to provide him with strong psychological motivation to surmount the difficulties in adjusting to his new culture:

> I am looking forward to the fall of the communist some day and when we are ready to go back to Vietnam, we have a better status. We able to help our friends and our country. They provided a good job training and education here and we should learn as much as we can . . . so if we go home some day, we will be able to help our country. I often tell my friends that each one of us should at least know one or two types of job skill or training . . . so when we go home we will be able to train other persons. . . . I have a wish that the young people will study hard and succeed . . . that is a way to love your country. . . . It is not necessary that you must join into any political party or protest or do any thing dangerous to show your love for your country. Everything you do for the future (like education) of your country has showed that you love your country already . . . it has showed that you love and care for other 60 million Vietnamese who are still in Vietnam. . . . I often tell my friends to pass on their experience to the new comers — like, for example . . . if you are senior at UCD, you should help the other new Vietnamese student . . . about the information at the school . . . about the class . . . or books . . . or just about the opinion on the "styles and technique" of the instructors. . . . I think it is very important.

The Contradictions of Self-Sufficiency: Nhan's Story

Accompanied by her husband and youngest son, 52-year-old Nhan arrived in the U.S. in 1990 through the Orderly Departure Program. After leaving Saigon, Nhan and her family spent 10 days in Thailand and then flew to the U.S. and went immediately to Sacramento, where her sponsors, a sister and her oldest son, reside. Qualifying for special status given to former officials of the Vietnamese government, Nhan and her family were eligible for one year of government assistance, which included cash payments, food stamps, and Medi-Cal. Since then, Nhan has supported her family through informal employment, her children's earnings from after-school jobs, and some assistance from her sister. When we interviewed her, she and her husband were attending ESL classes and waiting to hear about employment after having several job interviews.

"Orderly departure" is an anticlimactic and somewhat misleading description of Nhan's arrival, as it reveals little of her experiences in Vietnam and struggle to come to the U.S. When questioned about who in her family made the decision to leave Vietnam, Nhan frankly replied, "Well, everyone did, beginning in 1975. We tried to escape about 20 times,

but we didn't make it." Repeatedly caught by communist guards after their attempted escapes, Nhan and her family were jailed multiple times, only later to bribe the guards for their release. Nhan's oldest son finally escaped in the early 1980s and later became one of his family's sponsors in the U.S.

Prior to these tumultuous events, Nhan lived with her husband and two sons in Saigon, where she was raised. Her father was a teacher and her mother a small business owner. After graduating from high school in 1958, Nhan attended the National Business School for four years. Upon completing her business course, Nhan seized the opportunity to work for a government-owned cement company that had opened an office in Saigon's central business district. Controlling scarce building materials, the company sold its products only to other government agencies and construction companies. Nhan was in charge of shipping and receiving.

During this time Nhan met and married her husband, who was employed by the Department of Economy. Nhan's husband was a manager of business finance, conducting financial transactions with countries throughout the world. Nhan described their standard of living as a "middle-class condition," meaning that her husband's salary was sufficient to meet their needs, but when they both worked they could save money.

With the fall of Saigon in 1975, Nhan's life quickly and dramatically changed. Her husband, considered a high-ranking official in the Vietnamese government, was sent to reeducation camp in Hanoi, because of his status. Believing her husband's survival was dependent on her visits, Nhan described the remarkable trips she made to the camp, where she was permitted to visit her husband only twice a year for the next five years:

> If I didn't go to see and take care of him, he would die by then. Because, all reeducation camps were very poor. There wasn't enough food and water for POWs . . .
>
> Every time, I got a permit to visit my husband. First, I had to buy everything to make dry meat to make about six Kgs that would supply him for six months or more. Because they might not allow us to go for the next six months. All the food I prepared, had to be dried. Therefore it could be stored for a longer period of time, such as milk, sugar, etc. . . . All together it weighed about couple hundred Kgs. I had to carry it from the South to the North by train. Because my food stuffs were too heavy to go by plane. Buying a train ticket wasn't easy. I had to pay $5 instead of $1 on the black market. It was the hardest work I have ever done in my life. There were many people who had the same difficult situation. On the way we all helped each other to survive to get there.
>
> *How could you carry that much food with you?*
>
> I had to hire people at certain stops to help me carry it from one place to another, like when I had to change transportation.
>
> *Could you stay overnight with your husband?*
>
> No, they didn't allow me until 1979 when my husband was about to be released. Before I could only see my husband for about a half hour. From the camp to the main road was a distance of about 25 Km. Without a road or trail, I had to walk and run quickly to be able to catch the bus before dark. Sometime I

couldn't make it. I had to stop by some houses on the way to ask for a place to stay over night. This was very dangerous, some people got killed.

How long did it take you to complete your trip?

About seven days. Sometimes 10 days or even 15 days. The average was three days by train and one day by bus to get to the camp.

So, you spent three days traveling and were only allowed to see your husband for a half an hour?

Yes!

Left behind in Saigon to support her two sons, Nhan remained at the cement company for a short time before she resigned her position. Reeducated for seven days within the firm, Nhan believed that her working conditions would become increasingly intolerable because of her status as a former government employee:

> First, I was one of reeducated people, and sooner or later they would try to get rid of me due to my high official status in the former government. At that time, all company official had to be reeducated in different ways. President, directors and managers were sent someplace else, while supervisors were reeducated within the system. Also, if I do my job well somebody else will receive credit for it, but if I don't do my job well then they come down on me and I accept responsibility. Therefore, the best way was to quit the job. But to resign my job wasn't easy. I had to have good reasons. The reasons were my children and living without my husband (he was still in reeducation camp). My children were about 6 and 4 of age. And they needed me to be take care of them. Finally, the Communist accepted my resignation.

Drawing upon her business skills and savings and taking advantage of her location in the central business district, Nhan opened a small pharmacy in Saigon's market area. Under close monitoring by Communist functionaries because of her status, Nhan purchased medicine that people had received as presents from settled relatives and then resold American, French, and Canadian medicine to her customers. She initially operated her business without interference from the new government. Within a short time, however, they attempted to nationalize the pharmacy, but without success, as Nhan recounted:

> [A]t that time they needed people to run their own business. So, they could have import goods to use, and also to keep all businesses running well. But it was just for a while. After that they wanted to nationalize my business. Then they send their own people to operate my business, and I become just a worker even though it was my own business. Fortunately, they couldn't handle my business. Finally, they returned it to me.

At the same time, Communist officials began to pressure Nhan and her children to relocate from Saigon to a "new economic zone." These zones, located in the countryside, are designated areas where former government officials were forcibly relocated to perform hard labor, including agricultural and forestry work. Undaunted by the almost daily harassment by a government committee, Nhan refused to leave Saigon and the house she had lived in since her marriage:

They had a women club. This club was sent to talk to me almost everyday. They said: "If you don't go to economic zone, your husband won't be home soon." The more they kept telling me this, the more I refused to believe it. Then I said: "I would die happily here with my children rather than go to the economic zone." Finally, they realized I was too strong for them, so they gave up on me.

When questioned what life was like, supporting her two children while being watched and threatened by government functionaries, Nhan responded in her matter-of-fact fashion:

It was all right. Regardless of my bad record, I could survive using my business skills. Because I lived right in the center of the business district, if I couldn't do my medicine business, I could turn around to do something else.

In 1980, Nhan's husband was released from reeducation camp. Rejoining her in Saigon, he began to work in the business she had started. For the next 10 years Nhan and her husband operated the pharmacy, waiting for their sponsorship to be approved, interrupted only by their attempted escapes. Avoiding any type of involvement with the government because of their "bad record," as she put it, Nhan and her husband turned down an offer of teaching jobs because of the government's role in determining the content of school curriculum. Finally receiving permission to leave in 1990, Nhan and her family readied for departure. Immediately prior to leaving Saigon, the city in which she had lived her entire life, the government seized the home that Nhan had once refused to relinquish.

Nhan and her family survived their first year in the U.S. through a combination of resources, including government assistance, earnings from her oldest son's job, and help from her sister. When asked whether the government assistance she received was adequate to make ends meet, she responded that it was sufficient for survival, realizing that its purpose was not to live conveniently or luxuriously. She had chosen to rent a house for her family rather than a small apartment, and used her son's earnings to absorb the additional rental costs:

There [would be] enough if I didn't rent a house . . . just rent an apartment or share a room with somebody. Some people told me why I received five hundreds and the rent cost seven hundreds dollars. It is my son who helped me with the rent. I want to live with my sons. It is easier for the people who don't have family here . . . they can live anywhere they want. In the case that people don't have enough money . . . it is because of them. . . . I think the welfare has the good and accurate calculation and judgment about the assistance. The purpose is to help you through the hard time . . . it is not for you to live in luxury and convenience.

Since their time-limited government assistance of one year has expired, Nhan has become the primary support of her family through informal employment in a Vietnamese friend's small business. In addition, she is assisted by the wages of her sons' after-school jobs. Interestingly, when questioned whether or not she was employed, Nhan at first replied, "No, not really," viewing her informal employment as a temporary condition as she and her husband seek permanent jobs. Yet Nhan's informal work, which garners about $900 a month in cash plus meals at the workplace, is the primary means by which the family meets their daily living expenses, which includes a $700 monthly rent payment.

Are you employed now?

> No, not really. I and my husband want to work for the government. So far, we had a couple of jobs interviews, and we are waiting. Meanwhile, I temporary work helping my friend to run their business from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. I get paid by salary; $900 a month in cash, including meals.

An incessant worker, Nhan attends ESL class every day after her job. Her daily schedule is very busy, beginning before 6 a.m. for work, traveling to class to study English from 2 to 5 p.m., and returning home after 5:00 to begin preparing dinner. Given her earnings, business training, and initiative, Nhan is in charge of decisionmaking for all the household expenses, although she concedes that she would discuss a major purchase such as a car with the rest of the family. Indicating the informal authority mothers exert over children and their accompanying close relations in Vietnam, Nhan proudly noted that her sons voluntarily give her their earnings for the family's expenses — the "Vietnamese way," as she put it. Thus her mental frame of mind is good — Nhan says she is too busy to be depressed — except for a gnawing concern until she and her husband find permanent jobs:

> I am busy all of the time, I study and I work . . . and I go home at 5:00 to cook. . . . I am not feeling lonely or sad . . . My moral state of mind at this time makes me feel very happy, but I am just a little bit uncomfortable about our finances. Because there is no one working yet.

Currently, Nhan's husband attends ESL classes while searching for employment. In addition to studying English, he was one of the few second-wave immigrants in our study to participate in several Vietnamese mutual assistance associations, including Bac Viet and a Vietnamese POW association. Although Nhan is too busy to attend meetings, her husband's participation allows him to engage in important aspects of the traditional male role while he remains unemployed. These include representing the family and their interests in the public sphere, as well as sustaining connections and camaraderie with other Vietnamese men, especially with those who share life- defining experiences such as imprisonment during the war.

Although their adjustment has not been easy, Nhan and her family have made impressive strides toward self-sufficiency in the year and a half they have lived in their new culture. Already interviewing in local companies for jobs, Nhan remains optimistic about obtaining employment because of the opportunity she perceives the U.S. to hold. Her eventual employment goals are either to operate her own business, thus drawing on her previous experience, or work for the government. The major obstacle to achieving these goals, and the one voiced by all the Vietnamese in our study, is her inability to speak English well, which she is attempting to remedy through diligent study, a strategy she strongly recommends to other newcomers:

> I can see there are many jobs that we can do. But we need to have manpower. The biggest problem is speaking English. My relatives encouraged and supported me mentally and financially to open a business but I couldn't do it because I have a language problem. I can't make good contact if I don't speak English. I feel I just can't handle the business right now. I think that working for the government is the best way to do.

> If you can speak English and able to listen to English, then it is easy to find a job here. There are many jobs available. I see that they have a state exam every three month. I have problem with the interview part. I am old now, so studying English is a problem for me, too. My little son, when we were in Vietnam, I made him to go to study English at least two hours every day with a friend of mine. But he was not able to use the language very often so he still has problem with his accent, but I believe he will be improving in time. Many jobs are available out there and some people complain. They will find the job easier if they learn the necessary skills for the job. There are two kinds of people: one of the kind is the "lazy kind" who want to live on welfare and doesn't want to study. We need to study when we are young and when we have time . . . when the time come, we can use our skills for the job we wanted.

As that statement indicates, Nhan has mixed feelings about welfare, an attitude shared by many of the Vietnamese men and women we interviewed. On the one hand, she realizes its necessity in the transition between two very different cultures, especially in obtaining language and job skills. Citing her own case as an example, she felt that the assistance she received was essential to her initial settlement and that in her general experience social service providers were efficient, helpful and kind, especially a fellow Vietnamese caseworker. In fact, Nhan was quite straightforward in discussing her use of welfare, regarding it as a program sanctioned by the U.S. government for which she was entitled:

> It was all right, I felt comfortable. . . . [I]t wasn't begging or anything. The maximum time we can receive is within a year. It is not different from anyone else.

At the same time, Nhan was emphatic about the purpose of welfare, which she viewed as the means available to acquire the needed skills to obtain a good job to get on with "real life," rather than a means for prolonged survival:

> Well, it's good and bad, it depends on receiver. The purpose of the assistance is to help people prepare for their lives when they first come so that they can go to school and work afterward. Like I said, there are two kind of people receiving welfare. One receives welfare to build and to prepare for their real life, while the others live on welfare to survive. So it is bad when it encouraged people to become lazy. So, I really don't have any comments about this. If the receivers are able to sense their responsibility and their rights, then I think that is a good idea . . . matter of fact, it is very good. If people can go to school and study . . . if not they can learn the job skills.

Nhan's mixed feelings about assistance, and those of other second-wave settlers, echoed U.S. mainstream attitudes about welfare. Moreover, Nhan observed a further contradiction in the system, which she believed needed to be remedied to offer more effective assistance to newcomers: the penalizing of refugees who work to supplement assistance by cutting back their benefits. For newcomers, she believes, the process becomes counterproductive in acquiring valuable work experience. It also encourages some refugees to hide additional income by seeking unregulated, informal employment for cash with employers who then take advantage of the newcomers' unprotected status by paying drastic, subminimum wages:

I see there is one thing they could help people better. They shouldn't threaten people that they will cut the welfare if people started working. That the welfare encourages the people to become lazy and lie. They would work for cash and the welfare doesn't know about it. I think that many people on training now want to work part-time to have some experience so when they ready to get out to go to work, they will be able to find the job easier and they won't face the problem of no money and no job either. For example, my little son, he received 340 dollar each month. He received 250 dollar from the newspaper route job . . . and the welfare took off 250 dollar from his check from welfare. So he didn't want to work any more. They take it off even for $150 or any smaller amount . . . so people become lazy . . . why work and still receive same amount of money? Since there is a certain period of time people can receive the assistance . . . so the welfare should allow people to go to work to have some experience. Many people work for cash and get robbed from their boss. They pay you maximum $2 per hour of working.

Learning English at 52 years old, interviewing for jobs and working to maintain her family, this unrelentingly practical woman has even set herself a timeline for achieving a reasonable quality of life:

It is truth that people live with their hope . . . I have been working hard to achieve the thing that I want. I started from beginning to rebuild what I had lost. My life will be very much in normal within next five years. But the living is much lower now comparing to the time I was in Vietnam.

Moreover, Nhan's progress toward self-sufficiency has included learning an important but unfortunate feature of her new culture: the burden of survival falls primarily on the individual and the strengths and resources that she or he can muster:

Many of my close friends are still nice to me . . . and the relationship between my sisters are still normal. But I see that you must take care of yourself and must not depend on other people, like when you were in Vietnam. People around me are always there for me, but I try my best to help myself without asking for help.

The above stories convey some of the multitextured feelings and actions of second-wave Vietnamese settlers toward the circumstances they meet in their new culture. Initially striking is the dramatic altering of their lives after 1975 and the harrowing conditions they experienced, whether escaping or "officially departing" from Vietnam. The diversity of their responses toward settlement in the U.S., affected by their psychological state during exit from Vietnam and the social resources available to them upon arrival, becomes understandable when viewed in this context.

The overwhelming majority of the Vietnamese we interviewed initially survived on government assistance. Social service providers we met with agreed with our respondents that it is extremely difficult to learn English in a year and receive adequate training for anything more than a low-skilled, low-paying, entry-level job. Given the difficulty in acquiring the basic skills for self-sufficiency and the high levels of unemployment among middle-age and older men, approximately a third of our respondents continued to collect assistance after their first year in the U.S. Yet, as the narratives above indicate, many

second-wave settlers feel humiliated by and even disdainful of welfare dependency, preferring work to achieve self-sufficiency.

Huu's invoking of the larger Vietnamese community for help in guiding his children and Nhan's realization that adjustment depends largely on self-reliance indicate the atomization of many second-wave refugees and immigrants. Lack of participation in formal and informal networks of support has resulted in an extreme reliance on immediate family members by these settlers, and particularly on the financial assistance of children while they attend school. Although reliance on family is part of the "Vietnamese way," as Nhan described, and provides a valuable lesson for American individualists on the responsibility of individuals to the community, such reliance may be placing an additional burden on the children's performance in the absence of other forms of support from extended family members or ethnic associations.

Perhaps the most significant finding conveyed by the above stories is the changing social and economic roles of Vietnamese women. For many women, this process began in Vietnam out of necessity as they became the family's sole support, formal authority figure, and public mediator while their husbands were imprisoned. In the U.S., the women's roles are changing out of both necessity and choice, as described below, as many women are forced to become the primary provider for the first time, in a new cultural context.

When Nhan was questioned about how she and her husband dealt with any possible conflict occurring between them in their new culture, she offered this seasoned reply, "We are old enough to understand and forgive each other." Not all families, however, have been as fortunate in weathering the pressures and challenges of changing gender and familial relations.

THE CHANGING SOCIAL RELATIONS OF FAMILY LIFE

The changing roles experienced by Vietnamese women in their new culture, in which many have entered the labor market for the first time, and/or have become the primary economic supporter, is leading to increased conflict and family problems. This is exacerbated by the father's contradictory position as an authority figure at home, while experiencing a loss of power in the public sphere, due either to accepting a job below his skill and educational level (as is the case with first-wave Vietnamese men), or unemployment and discriminatory practices in the occupational world. All of the community development specialists we interviewed concurred that families are experiencing increased tensions at home as they attempt to reconcile traditional with changing modern roles in a new cultural context, as reported by this provider:

> [There are] a lot of real frustrations for men. They are no longer able to assume that dominant role, because they are not breadwinners any more, they aren't held in respect any more because they don't know English, and they can't get along. And that is a big problem, not only between women and men, but between parents and the children. "Oh, Mom and Dad, you're so old fashioned, what do you know, you don't even speak English, why do I have to listen to you,"

you know, and it's something that Americans would say their teenagers have been saying for years, but these people are not used to it, you know, they are used to the old subordination to the parents, and that is the norm, and that's what's expected and that's how they've been trained. So then it just throws them for a loop when the kids are out of control now.

Increased conflict at home is leading new Vietnamese refugee women to engage in additional survival strategies, such as seeking help in tension-ridden or even abusive situations. The motivation of new refugee women is especially important here, because the counseling services and battered women's shelters available to them are often underfunded, understaffed by bilingual counselors, and lack familiar cultural products and basic foodstuffs, such as rice. A community development specialist described one of her cases to illustrate the severity of family problems now occurring in the Vietnamese refugee community and the extreme actions some new women refugees take to survive:

> I don't know if I can say which [family problem] is the most severe. Some groups experience some types more than others; the alienation of the kids is a big problem. Some wife abuse, some child abuse. I say child abuse is probably low, but wife abuse is higher than we like to see it. . . . And a lot of times it is a real result of frustration on the part of the men who are disempowered and who are frustrated and can't control the children, can't control their wives and that's the only way they know how. . . . And then, you know, people are not real interested in using, say, family counseling services. Women don't know, or can't use, because of language barriers or whatever, they can't use the family or the battered women resources.
>
> I once had a woman who called . . . here because her husband had beat her and they were living near his family, which is their custom. And she didn't have any people, you know, her own relatives here. And he forbade anybody of his family to help her, so she had nobody, and plus I called around, once we got in contact with her, we called around to the various women shelters, and . . . some of them were equipped for limited-English-speakers and some weren't. . . . Some of them had rice in stock and some didn't. You know, that kind of thing would be plus. How would the woman get there? She doesn't drive. I took her because we found out about her. And it was just a very, very roundabout way we even found out about her — because she called the only people she knew . . . being a new person here, she called her family, who happened to live in Wisconsin. They called Lutheran Social Services who called us here in Sacramento, and then we happened to get in touch with her. But, see, talk about limited access, that was very roundabout, and it's only because she is very determined that she got [help]. I have always been thinking, since then, how many other women are there who don't get or can't get help for that kind of thing?

Vietnamese refugee survival strategies in Sacramento have been significantly affected by changing gender relations, partly resulting from women's participation in the workplace. First-wave Vietnamese refugee women were willing to take any jobs to reproduce the household. Despite their middle-class backgrounds, they accepted work as manicurists,

nurses' aides, restaurant and hotel workers, as well as manual labor. First-wave Vietnamese men, in contrast, tended to be government officials and did not like to take jobs too different from their past experience. They avoided manual labor, preferring unemployment or government clerical jobs when available.

Similarly, second-wave Vietnamese refugee women obtain low-skilled service or manual labor jobs to help support their families as part of a low-income, dual-earning household or while their spouses obtain education, job training, or in many cases receive unemployment. This has become a source of conflict and tension within these Vietnamese households, because wives have been able to get clerical training and find jobs that have helped to enhance their self- and social esteem, while husbands have lost status, both in the household and in the larger society. One woman in our study described what she perceived as a shift in attitude regarding women's status, largely effected by their increased economic participation:

> In my parents' time, the woman is subordinate, she had to tend to every one of her husband's need. She's more or less like a slave to her husband. But that has changed. Nowadays, that attitude is no longer. The woman used to stay home before while the husband went to work. It's different now. Both spouses work, so they should help each other out.

The difficulties men and women are experiencing in reconciling the expectations, precepts, and duties of traditional roles with the constraints and opportunities presented in the new culture of course encompass their role as parents. If parents are expressing difficulty in coping with the conflicts between the relative openness of the new society and their traditional parental roles, children face an even more conflicting set of expectations and often confusing choices in their new culture. In addition to facing such practical issues of adjustment as learning a new language, becoming accustomed to the U.S. school system and meeting new peers, they confront a host of social-psychological issues in straddling or negotiating conflicting Vietnamese values and expectations of filial respect and authority with the expectations of independence, self-satisfaction, and questioning of authority that are to some extent encouraged by their new society. Thus, Vietnamese youth face one of the biggest challenges to adjustment in carving out an identity and place in their own families while becoming Vietnamese-American in the larger society (Kibria, 1990).

In a community forum we attended recently, convened after the tragic incident involving the taking of hostages by four Vietnamese and Chinese-Vietnamese youth in a Good Guys' store, which resulted in a shoot-out with Sacramento police, participants described in detail the pressures confronting Vietnamese youth. One respected Vietnamese leader described the conflict between traditional familial expectations of children and the youths' new-found freedom as one in which parents implore children "to go slow" while their peers encourage them "to go fast." A Vietnamese teacher in a south Sacramento school revealed the level of cultural misunderstanding that exists between recently arrived refugee families and the U.S. school system: when a note is sent home from the teacher discussing a student's progress the parents often interpret it as a criticism of them. In the absence of government services, as well as school and youth counseling programs to bridge these gaps, it is no wonder that many recently arrived families feel frustrated and overburdened.

Perhaps one of the gravest concerns expressed by the parents we interviewed was their children's exposure to the problems of drug use and gang violence, echoing the concerns of many parents throughout the United States. This fear has been exacerbated for many second-wave settlers in Sacramento by the recent spate of gang violence experienced by the least-protected of these newcomers.

COMBATTING INTRAETHNIC VIOLENCE

The problems of second-wave boat people in Sacramento have been compounded by cultural misunderstandings in connection with the recent emergence of gang activities in their neighborhoods. In 1989 and 1990, a series of extortion attempts against small Southeast Asian-owned businesses and residential "home invasion robberies" began in Sacramento's Lemon Hill neighborhood and nearby suburbs with Vietnamese enclaves. Press accounts based on interviews with police and some of the victims paint a picture of emerging nomadic Vietnamese *bui doi* (or "dirt in the wind") youth gangs whose members are "fearless and ice cold," "have no compassion," and engage in brutal and violent practices against fellow refugees. These gangs first arose in the squalid and chaotic refugee camps of Southeast Asia, and are now being reconstituted in various "Little Saigons" throughout the U.S., including Lemon Hill.

The *bui doi* gangs are fundamentally different from other ethnic gangs in California. Because their practices are not tied to specific cities, they seek neither to obtain nor defend local "turf." Instead, they occupy an entirely new social space. Their internal structure is based on social networks that transcend locality, community, and place. They are nomads rather than settlers. They move nationally and even internationally from place to place where Southeast Asian refugees are concentrated, using the easy exit option of freeways and airports to escape identification and capture. Their "home," both in transit and when operating in the scattered ethnic enclaves they victimize, is the motel. While "living in the 'mo,'" they prey on local ethnic households, exploiting their knowledge of the general cultural understandings and misunderstandings that handicap the least-adapted segments of these communities. These vagabond gangs appropriate images available globally in Kung Fu movies and on videos to glamorize the brutal tactics they use to coerce their victims.

The *bui doi* gangs in Sacramento are comprised largely of ethnically Chinese Southeast Asian refugee youth who prey on older refugee families who are reluctant to contact police because they mistrust formal institutions of law enforcement and fear reprisals. The victims are chosen for home invasions precisely because of their isolation from and misunderstanding of mainstream American institutions. Unfamiliar with or mistrustful of banks, many second-wave refugee families keep their life savings in cash or commodities like gold and jewelry hidden in their homes. *Bui doi* gang members target such households for invasion, often torturing their robbery victims to get them to reveal the hiding place of their store of capital. Once robbed in this way, the victims' cultural misunderstanding of the legal practices of bail bonding and probation leads them to assume that their assailants have bribed police officials to obtain release from jail. They thus transfer their knowledge of corrupt practices that were common in Vietnam into a different cultural context, where it

is inappropriate because it reinforces their suspicion and mistrust of potentially useful institutions and impedes the ability of the legal system to try, convict, and incarcerate a parasitic segment of the refugee population.

In a dramatic example of resistance to this mode of intimidation, a Chinese-Vietnamese woman refugee who owns a local Southeast Asian market recently testified against a group of gang members attempting to extort $100 per day from surrounding Southeast Asian business people. In addition, she persuaded her reluctant male employees and fellow merchants to testify against the gunmen. The courageousness of her act is evidenced by the fact that her employees were repeatedly threatened at gunpoint, and another merchant was brutally beaten at gunpoint by gang members in front of his employees and customers. Invoking law enforcement authorities also demonstrates a willingness to learn about, identify with, and use the formal social controls available in the new context. In the businesswoman's own words:

> Somebody had to do something. Other people in this community scratch their own backs. It's almost a custom to keep the problem to themselves and not cause trouble. Not me. I'm not going to let this go . . . What good is it if nobody is standing up for what is right? This is America, and I'm going to do what is right in this country. What do I gain if I let them keep coming back and threatening? I'm not scared, I work too hard to give my money to someone else.

This incident illustrates the reorganization and expansion of identity in a new cultural context. In this case, the woman storekeeper defied cultural barriers in overcoming both traditional gender role expectations and suspicions of authority figures. In addition, by participating in the legal system, she is incorporating into her identify the rights and benefits, as well as the obligations, of U.S. citizenship.

Unfortunately, the tactics used by local law enforcement officials to combat the recent extortions and home invasion robberies have undermined this type of legal and political incorporation, thus reinforcing rather than overcoming the reluctance of most second-wave refugees in Sacramento to use the U.S. legal system. Despite the fact that, by their own accounting, the home invasions were perpetrated by nomadic gangsters who lived nowhere in particular, except "the 'mo,'" Sacramento police officials have engaged in a series of indiscriminate searches of Vietnamese residents during random sweeps of all of the patrons of restaurants, clubs, pool halls, and other establishments frequented by local Vietnamese refugees. For example, in a three-week period in March 1990, scores of patrons were detained, photographed, and interrogated although there was no evidence linking them to any crimes. Although challenged by civil liberties advocates for ignoring the "probable cause" for search requirement, these sweeps were justified by law enforcement officers, who waxed enthusiastically in the local press about their effectiveness. In defending the need for the sweeps and their legality, officers used phrases like "turning up the heat," "shaking the trees," and "putting on the pressure" in reference to the raids. Despite this implicitly intimidating rhetoric, detectives in charge of the robbery investigations told *The Sacramento Bee* that the purpose of the raid was legitimate — "we did not do this for intimidation, but for identification and intelligence gathering" (Hoge, 1990: A16).

In a further irony, some segments of the first-wave Vietnamese refugee community defended these raids. For example, one Vietnamese state government employee minimized

the civil liberties violations and stigmatizing effects of the raids by telling the press: "Personally, I don't think [the raids] violated their civil rights. Hey, compared to Vietnam, it's nothing. I feel those actions are necessary. It doesn't sound like democracy, but hell, it works."

Such strategies are unlikely to reduce the mistrust of law enforcement agencies that enables the *bui doi* to operate. Indeed, their modus operandi depends on precisely such mistrust. These law enforcement tactics, and their defense by more privileged first-wave refugees, reinforce the mistrust and hence the vulnerability of the most isolated second-wave families facing the pressures of adjustment.

UNDERSTANDING "DIFFERENCE": FORMULATING STATE POLICY FOR VIETNAMESE REFUGEES

In America's popular understanding of the new immigration from Southeast Asia, images and representations of refugees from Vietnam have been fraught with misunderstandings, exaggerations, and sometimes even clear misrepresentations of the fluid, highly differentiated, and still-emergent character of their settlement experiences. As the stories of the Vietnamese refugees and immigrants in our study portray, the differences existing between and among first- and second-wave settlers, and the conditions they faced in migrating from Vietnam and arriving in the United States, are crucial factors influencing their varied responses toward adjustment. Sorting out and understanding these differences is essential in providing effective and culturally appropriate policies to assist them to achieve their desired goal of self-sufficiency.

The relatively successful adjustment of first-wave settlers, which is often exaggerated and oversimplified, was facilitated by their urban backgrounds, education, occupational skills, and exposure to Western culture. Drawing on their previous work experience in Vietnam, many first-wave settlers, after learning adequate English, took advantage of county, state, and community agencies in Sacramento to locate employment. They also became active participants in the formation of Southeast Asian mutual assistance associations which, in addition to providing services to the Vietnamese community, gave them invaluable experience in interacting with their new culture.

Nonetheless, it would be a mistake to view their transition to U.S. society as a smooth or easy one. The exodus of first-wave settlers was inextricably linked to our involvement in the protracted war in Southeast Asia and, in some cases, to active connections with the government and business positions of first-wave settlers in Vietnam. These settlers left Vietnam unexpectedly, often with less than a week's notice to prepare for departure, and in many cases less than 48 hours. Arriving in a new, bewildering culture, which at first had no systematic refugee assistance program, first-wave settlers had to depend heavily on the wishes and resources of sponsors. Moreover, they had to rely on their own initiative and resources to reestablish communities and networks to ease their transition, only later using assistance programs to adapt their previous skills to upgrade their employment.

One woman who came in the first wave offered a poignant example of the difficulties and sacrifices involved in resettlement. Upon arriving in the United States, she worked to

put herself and her husband through college while she had three children. During this time, her husband's parents and siblings began to arrive, moving in with her family. According to the expectations of Vietnamese culture, she continued to attend school while working full-time to put her husband's siblings through college. Eventually she obtained a managerial position with a large, state agency in Sacramento, becoming the first female Vietnamese manager in state government. The earlier strains, however, proved too great for her marriage, and she and her husband went through a painful divorce. When complimented on her employment success, she paused and simply replied, "Yes, you keep saying how successful I am. I guess it depends on your definition of success."

Second-wave settlers, arriving from around 1980 onward, comprise a highly heterogeneous group with regard to social backgrounds, the postwar conditions they experienced in and while leaving Vietnam, and the different circumstances they have faced in the United States. These settlers, who captured the world's attention by escaping Vietnam by boat, were primarily ethnic Chinese who often were owners of small businesses or merchants facing discrimination by the new Communist government. Since then, the inability of Vietnam's postwar economy to support its people, exacerbated by the refusal of the United States to reestablish economic and political relations, has resulted in thousands of second-wave settlers escaping or leaving Vietnam through the Orderly Departure Program. Many of the male settlers, as typified by the men in our study, spent years in reeducation camps while their families struggled to survive. Moreover, many second-wave settlers also spent time in squalid Southeast Asian refugee camps before arriving in the United States. Thus, second-wave settlers arrive in various psychological states, some quite traumatized by their experiences, to face the adjustment process.

In addition to experiencing the normal adjustment pressures, the most recently arrived second-wave settlers now face compassion fatigue fueled by the weak economy, tight labor markets, decreased government assistance for refugees, and increasing isolation from community organizations founded by first-wave refugees, and even from extended family members who have achieved some degree of self-sufficiency. Compassion fatigue is evident in efforts by the federal government to further reduce formal social support for legal refugees, as well as by the state to shift its own burden of support to the federal government. Yet, as our study demonstrates, social assistance was not only crucial for the newcomers' first year of survival, but was largely inadequate for obtaining English language and job skills to ensure employment. To reduce it further would place an overwhelming strain on already overburdened families, who have become substitutes for, rather than invaluable supplements to, government assistance.

Self-described middle-age (40s) and older (50s) Vietnamese settlers are a large group facing an uphill battle in learning new job skills or retooling old ones for advancement. Although in their culture of origin they would expect their children to begin taking care of them at their age, every respondent we interviewed both realized the need and wanted to work in the United States. Effective English-language acquisition and job training programs are crucial mechanisms of government assistance for helping them achieve self-sufficiency. Adequate employment by middle-age parents would reduce their dependency on welfare, and reduce the pressures placed on their children for providing financial support while attending school.

The men and women we studied were aware of the need to learn the types of skills that would make them employable in the mainstream economy. One case in point was Nhan, who, as a competent businesswoman, realized she did not yet possess adequate English language skills to operate a successful business. In addition, an astute young man in our study, contradicting the optimism of many social scientists regarding enclave opportunities, advocated the learning of American business techniques to enable Vietnamese business to expand into mainstream markets:

> If I only talk about the money aspect, the Vietnamese are very adept at finding ways to make money. However, if one only wants to make business with the Vietnamese community, one won't get very far. I think the Vietnamese businessmen should learn and find out more about their trade so that they can expand their company with the American, mix the two cultures together. For example, if we sell hamburger, instead of just grilling the plain ground beef, we might want to marinate the beef with some black peppers, some onions, garlics. We should adopt other methods so that we can reach a larger market. With our creativeness, that shouldn't be hard. The hard part is to sit down and think.

Perhaps one of the most productive investments that can be made in the advancement of Vietnamese immigrants is to support their traditionally held value of education by guaranteeing educational assistance for their children. Every parent we interviewed reported that a primary reason for leaving Vietnam was to ensure that their children received an education. Moreover, their goal for the future was to have their children attend college. Vietnamese American youth, who initially majored in the physical sciences, are now studying history, literature, social sciences, and social work as their language skills have improved and as they have become familiar with the nuances of their new culture. Through humanities and social science studies, their potential contribution to the Vietnamese American community and wider society is enormous.

In addition to guaranteeing educational assistance for college-age youth, there is an urgent need for school counseling and youth programs for Vietnamese youngsters. Model minority stereotypes place an unfair burden on these youth, as the pressures they face in becoming adolescents are compounded by becoming bicultural individuals. Counseling programs can assist youngsters in making an authentic and healthy adjustment in the process of reconciling traditional familial expectations with the most positive aspects of their new culture. Moreover, school counseling and youth programs in the lower grades can help instill communication skills to enable youngsters to keep the lines open with their parents as they approach adolescence. Vietnamese American social workers and psychologists now being educated will be important resources and role models in responding to this urgent need.

Finally, the needs of the substantial group of older Vietnamese refugees and immigrants will require careful attention by policymakers. Far from their countryside and thus far unable to return, they are in many ways trapped in suburban, asphalt communities in Sacramento, San Jose, and Orange County, feeling isolated, useless, and separated from the respect their experience and wisdom commands in their culture or origin. Mental health and social work providers will need to familiarize themselves with the activities and values that seniors identify with and cherish to help reinstill feelings of self-worth and efficacy.

In turn, renewed feelings of efficacy would enable seniors to participate in and strengthen the Vietnamese American community by providing invaluable experience, cultural roots, and remembered history.

In creating effective and culturally appropriate forms of assistance to help Vietnamese newcomers achieve self-sufficiency and contribute their talents and abilities to their new society, program developers generally will find a highly motivated group. As attested to by this Vietnamese youth, these are among the most important reasons for undertaking such an unexpected, arduous and painful journey in the first place:

> Like I said, deep down inside, the Vietnamese like to advance, they can't stand living on the edge of barely having two meals a day. If that's what they want, they could have stayed in Vietnam.

Those involved in shaping public policy — journalists, policymakers, social and political analysts alike — have a responsibility to look, listen, and act with intelligence, reflection and care, recognizing that what some have called "the politics of difference" exists as much within as between new immigrant groups in their relations with each other and their new society. "Ethnic" experience depends not just on nationality, but also on differences of gender, class, family structure, historical and contemporary context. The shapers of public opinion, who fuel expectations of receptivity or opposition to America's new minorities, often fail to give due recognition to the complexity of these internal differences. This failure is contributing to the development of new ethnic and racial stereotypes. By paying close attention to the differences within America's newer minority groups, we may yet be able to avoid another round of ethnic and racial antagonism in which our deep-seated structural problems are blamed on new immigrants.

Chapter 5

THE IU-MIEN MIGRATION TO CALIFORNIA: A COMPRESSED TRANSITION TO MODERNITY

Legend has it that the Iu-Mien people have been looking for a home for the past 600 years. The Mien are believed to have originated in northern China, migrating over several centuries to southern China and the highlands of Southeast Asia, including Burma, Vietnam, northern Thailand, and Laos. Practicing slash-and-burn agriculture, they moved villages periodically, when the mountainous soils they cultivated became depleted. Despite their many relocations, they developed a highly stable and cohesive form of social organization based on the household; political organization based on clans; and cultural practice based on a unique combination of animistic and Taoist religious beliefs.

Until the Communist victory in Laos in 1975, the Mien and a larger tribal group, the Hmong, dominated the mountains of northern Laos. During the part of the war in Indochina now known as the "Secret War" in Laos, thousands of Hmong and Mien tribespeople became deeply embroiled in the conflict. As we shall see, clans from both peoples were recruited by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency as part of an irregular military force, the *Armeé clandestine*, to fight against the Pathet Lao forces. Other Mien households were recruited to grow poppies and produce opium as part of a CIA plan to support their anticommunist activities by selling drugs. Still more thousands of Hmong and Mien farmers and their families were forced to flee their highland villages to escape the extreme violence of the secret war, sometimes living in the jungle or in temporary villages built by the U.S. Agency for International Development to house refugees.

When Laos fell, along with Saigon, in 1975, some Hmong and Mien tribesmen mounted a protracted military resistance, while thousands of other tribesmen and their households fled across the Mekong River into Thailand. Between 1975 and 1979, more than 70 percent of the Mien population of Laos fled (Moore-Howard, 1989:75). Their escape route was a difficult trek through the jungle and across the Mekong. Many individuals and even entire families were injured or killed in the flight. Those who survived often spent years of temporary asylum in refugee camps along Thailand's northeastern border while awaiting acceptance as legal refugees in the United States. The early refugees to be accepted for resettlement were those who could prove they were former members of the Royal Lao Army or the clandestine force. By the mid-1980s, more than 30,000 Mien refugees were estimated to be in Thailand, while fewer than 20,000 remained in Laos (Lewis and Lewis, 1984: Chapter 4). By 1990, more than 16,000 Mien had resettled in the United States, with a large majority coming to northern California. The Sacramento Mien neighborhood that was the field site for our interviews constitutes the largest Mien enclave in the United States, with a population of more than 3,000.

IU-MIEN TRADITIONS

Prior to the war in Indochina, the social organization and cultural practices of the Iu-Mien highlanders of Laos had remained highly stable for centuries. They consisted of a clan-based patrilineal form of political organization and a patrilocal form of extended family household structure.

In Laos, each Mien village was made up of at least two clans, organized around the social roles of Mien headmen. These clan leaders maintained village security, organized and directed village celebrations, presided at meetings of male village elders, and mediated disputes between villages. Membership in one of the 12 Mien clans is inherited from one's father for life. Clan membership has also functioned as a means for establishing and maintaining social relations between geographically distant villages. During the Indochina war, the clan structure was used as a means of building Mien support for both the Royal and Pathet Lao Communist forces. Clan chiefs were key political actors whose structural prominence in the clan was of strategic importance as each side (as well as the CIA) sought to build allegiance and support (Ireson and Ireson, 1991:131).

Despite the political, communal maintenance, and ceremonial functions of the clans, the structure of Mien villages has been less important to the Mien people than the individual extended family household, which is the basic unit of social organization. Most of the remote mountain villages consisted of only 10 to 25 such household units. The traditional Mien household structure consists of the extended family, typically including a husband and wife, married sons and their families, and unmarried children. The household unit is usually large, often including 20 or more people tied to each other by reciprocal roles, expectations, and obligations. The father is the head or patriarch of the Mien household, and traditionally received the household income derived from the sale of animals. The income from cash crops, including the poppies grown to produce opium, was retained by the individual families living in the household. Parents were responsible for disciplining children and ending strife among their children, including married ones, using expulsion, if necessary, as a last resort.

All adult men living in the household had a special status, despite their obligation to their parents. They were served food first, before women and children ate. Wives were expected to remain subservient and deferential toward their husbands, as well as do all of the household chores and share in the field work, except for the heaviest work, like cutting trees, which was reserved for the men. The special status given to elders derived both from their special knowledge of religious rituals and from the fact that as survivors of the very demanding physical and organizational tasks of slash-and-burn agriculture, they were assumed to know a great deal about the practice of daily life.

Houses in the Mien villages served religious, as well as domestic, purposes. Homes traditionally contained both an ancestral altar and a "big door" opposite the altar, which was used only during special ceremonies in which ancestors and other deities of the spirit world were invoked to ensure health and prosperity for the household.

Unique among tribal people, the Mien have a tradition of writing, using Chinese characters, which dates back for several centuries (Lewis and Lewis, 1984:136). The writing is used primarily for recording religious rituals, keeping family records, and for

writing contracts and letters. In Laos, boys were often taught to read and write these characters either by their fathers or by Chinese teachers employed by the village for this purpose.

The Mien household religion consists of both animistic practice, spirit and ancestor worship, and elements of the Taoist religion learned in China several hundred years ago. The two systems have merged, producing a syncretism unique to the Mien people. The chief elements of this hybrid religious form include: a belief that each person has many souls situated in different bodily parts, and thus related to the person's physical health and well-being; a corresponding belief in reincarnation (e.g., if one owes a debt, one may be reincarnated to pay it back); a belief that material nature is suffused with many spirits who are guardians or stewards of such things as trees, bodies of water, and geographical regions, and whose proprietorship must be heeded; the deification of ancestors, particularly more recent generations, who are believed to protect all members of the household and insure their prosperity; and the performance of Taoist ritual practices, which requires some Chinese literacy by males, as well as the accumulation of money, goods, and livestock required for such rituals (Lewis and Lewis: 157). Given the unique set of hybridized beliefs, the Mien religion has both Taoist priests or big shamans, schooled in age-old ceremonies, rituals, and texts, as well as shamans who are believed to have special capacities for possession by animistic and ancestral spirits, and who help in bodily curing ceremonies and related ritual therapy.

In sum, all these secular and religious household practices of the Iu-Mien were intended to ensure a well-ordered integration of the household and the cosmos. In their traditional material culture, customs, and rituals, the Mien people constructed a worldview that valued communal history, individual productivity, and the accumulation of wealth. The latter enabled families to carry out religious ceremonies to maintain good relations with ancestors and the spiritual deities who are believed to guide well-being in both realms. Each Mien was traditionally expected to cultivate proper relationships within both the human realm and the spirit world. As summarized by Lewis and Lewis (1984), the Mien cosmology produces a uniquely well mannered and deferential form of being-in-the-world:

> There is a studied politeness and an effort to avoid causing another to lose face. Harmony within the household and village is of great importance. Efforts are made to adjust to local government requirements and to live acceptably within the prevailing social system. (169)

This pursuit of harmonious relations in nature and society is reflected in meticulous observation of ceremonies that pay proper respect to ancestors, household spirits, and public authority. It is reflected as well in their penchant for carefully negotiated contractual arrangements governing marriages, adoption, and market relations. All are intended to provide health, wealth, and ontological security in life and the hereafter.

THE SECRET WAR IN LAOS AND THE PRODUCTION OF MIEN REFUGEES

This hybrid, yet resilient, pattern of culture constructed and reproduced by the Mien highlanders of Laos over several centuries is now severely threatened in contemporary California. The political and economic transformations that the Iu-Mien people have encountered since the early 1960s have produced an unending series of disruptive migrations and temporary resettlements. The story of their flight through space from Laos to Thailand to the United States, while dramatic enough in its own right, pales in comparison to the extreme compression in time of their journey to contemporary California. Each successive stage of that journey, originally undertaken to preserve their way of life, has posed new challenges to it.

As noted above, to preserve their household independence in the 1960s, many Mien males either joined the Laotian Army or collaborated in the clandestine activities of the CIA. The extreme violence of the secret war forced other Mien villagers and their children to flee into the jungle or into temporary new villages set up by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) within Laos. Both sides demanded rice and livestock as tribute from villages that remained intact. When men left to become soldiers or members of the CIA irregular force, women were forced to do all of the work on the farm, including the most arduous tasks traditionally reserved for the men. All of these circumstances depleted the resources necessary for accumulating wealth, and thus maintaining and preserving traditional Mien religious practices. The secret war left many Mien families not only with painful memories, but with a deep sense of dislocation from their protective spirits. Thus, the capacity of the Iu-Mien people to reproduce their unique culture and way of life was already undermined long before their mass exodus into Thailand, when Laos fell to the Pathet Lao (Communist) forces in 1975.

Laos has been and remains basically a rural subsistence agrarian society, with over 85 percent of the population employed in agriculture. It is relatively sparsely populated, currently with about 4 million inhabitants, as compared to the 66 million people living in Vietnam. The Laotian population also remains clearly divided between the dominant, relatively more urbanized and nationally integrated lowland Lao, comprising half the population, and more than 40 different ethnic minorities, including several remote tribal groups, like the Mien, who practice slash-and-burn agriculture on the less fruitful soils of the mountainsides. The historical isolation of these villages, their limited integration into the nation's economy, and their extreme ethnic and linguistic diversity have all precluded the development of a unified and coherent Laotian national identity (Ireson and Ireson, 1991:129). The tendency of the lowland Lao has been to view the highlanders as primitives. Prior to their 1975 exodus, the Mien were largely excluded from formal education and even from acquisition of the dominant Laotian language.

The U.S. secret war in Laos was waged from the early 1960s until 1975. The American government's response to the efforts of Pathet Lao forces to control the countryside and establish a separate government in Laos was to authorize the CIA to recruit, train, and fund an irregular armed force, the *Armeé clandestine*, composed largely of Hmong and Mien tribesmen, to augment the Royal Lao Army. Mio (Hmong and Mien) tribespeople also were

recruited to produce opium for global export to provide additional financing for the secret war. By 1972, the Pathet Lao, aided by North Vietnam and China, controlled more than three-fourths of the territory of Laos. The Royal Lao government had become almost entirely dependent on U.S. foreign aid.

Throughout the long secret war, USAID "strategic development" projects financed the internal resettlement of hundreds of thousands of people displaced by the war, and by the saturation of the Laotian countryside and contested villages by the U.S. aerial bombardment that was a hallmark of the secret war. The carpet bombing of Laos was so intense and extensive that the 21 million tons of bombs dropped during the secret war was equal to the tonnage dropped in both the European and Pacific theaters in World War II (Ireson and Ireson, 1991:138-180). By 1973, as a result of over 10 years of warfare, more than one-third of the Laotian population, which then numbered 3 million, were living as refugees.

In addition to the bombing and "temporary resettlement" experiences, everyday social relations in Mien villages were also significantly disrupted by the effects of the military draft. As more and more able-bodied men were drawn into the 15-year war, tribal women frequently became responsible for all family tasks as well as running households in the absence of their husbands. This altered gender role became more extensive as military needs grew, and the male draft age on both sides dropped to 15.

The distortions produced in the urbanized Laotian market economy by the vast amounts of military and economic aid poured into the country drew some Mien highlanders to provincial capitals and other market towns to service an artificially created luxury consumer economy. This economy collapsed literally overnight when Western aid abruptly stopped in 1975. Some of the rightist Hmong and Mien guerrilla forces mounted a new round of armed resistance in northern Laos, which took the new Communist government more than two years to overcome. Many more people fled into Thailand.

The abrupt yet prolonged disruption of traditional Mien social relations and cultural practices by the secret war in Laos is evocatively captured in the following stories told by several Mien women, who first fled their villages in northern Laos in the early 1960s, spent many years in refugee camps in Thailand after 1975, and now live in Oakland, Richmond, and San Pablo, California, struggling to construct a viable Mien identity in the face of vastly different social, spatial, and temporal conditions.[2]

Liw Chian, an older woman, left her small village in the Laotian highlands with her husband and four children in the early 1960s. She fled to preserve her household resources from appropriation by soldiers from the lowland Laotian Army. She describes her departure in the following passages:

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[2] The voices of Liw Chian, Muey Sio, and Toud Koui have been drawn from ethnographies of Mien women in the San Francisco Bay Area conducted by Ann Goldman of the Laotian Handicraft Center in Berkeley, who generously shared with us the two unpublished writings cited in our References. We are especially grateful for obtaining access to her studies because our research relied largely on interviews with male respondents.

Laotian leaders came to our village to ask the village leaders for Mien soldiers. We didn't know why they needed soldiers. Our village leader picked one person and gave to them.

Then, late one night we were carrying rice home using bamboo torches. We heard an airplane and saw its light in the sky. We were very scared because we didn't know what it was. We had heard that airplanes could come and drop bombs on the village and everybody would die. After that, some people told us there was a war someplace, and they saw a lot of airplanes in the sky.

After that, soldiers often come to village, and families began to move things out to the jungle and farms to hide them because they were afraid soldiers would take them. First they would come and ask for rice. Everyone had to give some rice. Then they asked for chickens to eat. Later they asked for pigs. Then cows. They would just point to the cow they wanted and the people had to kill it for them to eat.

When we left, we took clothing, money, food, pots for cooking. We had four children then. My husband and I each carried one child. Muey Sio and her brother walked. We had two horses that carried clothes, blankets, rice, small pots. Now I have nothing I had then, except three children, one pair of pants, one pair earrings and one silver necklace.

Liw Chian's daughter, Muey Sio, was 7 when this flight took place. Her recollections vividly convey the traumatic and disruptive character of the forced internal migration to jungle encampments produced by the war in Laos:

In April 1962, we moved to another village at night. We could hear guns far away. We moved three times. The first time not too far from the village, and we stayed until the communists saw us there. Then across the river, where we stayed 2–3 months. But they were shooting too much at night again so we moved way, way up on the mountain to Nam He Bong. We had to carry what we ate and when that was gone we had to sneak back to our farm for more food. I remember there was an old, old woman who stayed on our farm to take care of our animals. When we went back to kill a pig to take to the jungle we saw her there. Very sad. She was very old and maybe handicapped and we could not take her. She cried and cried. We told her that was the last time we could go back. That was the last time we saw her. After that we don't know what she did. Maybe she died.

We stayed five months in Nam He Bong. We built little houses of banana leaves and bamboo. We got different things to eat in the jungle. My mother gave birth to her fifth child there, but after one month the baby died.

Nam He Bong was very dangerous. When we went down to the fields the communists were on the other mountain and they could see us. One day they threw a bomb to the field and many people were hurt.

There was a place down the hill for the men to stay to protect the village. Every family had to cook food for them, and my father had the job of taking them the food. One day my father took me with him. The soldiers threw bombs and shot guns and hurt a lot of people. Two men had their legs blown off, so it was

hard for those families. They had to carry the food and the babies and those sick people. There was no medicine to help.

From there we went to Man Wa, where the airplanes flew over and dropped rice. We stayed outside the village with many, many people from different villages. They all came together there. There were a lot of soldiers in uniform there and people with big jobs and walkie talkies. We stayed there a few weeks and then walked to Nam Tue.

Nam Tue was a temporary town which USAID established in the jungle for refugees who were forced to flee south. It included air strips, military personnel, rice drops, and some shops, schools, and health clinics. For many fleeing Mien people, it was their first encounter with the "otherness" of different Laotian ethnic groups and Western forms of social organization.

The adaptations required of Iu-Mien households forced to move to these temporary settlements are clearly captured in the descriptions of everyday life in Nam Tue provided by another Mien woman, Toud Koui:

Laotians spent all their money moving . . . 7, 8, 9, 10 years moving. People with no money had to stay there with the communists. In Nam Wa and Nam Tue there were many Hmong and different people. You could not talk to them. Some people used Chinese as a trade language. There were also government people, Americans, French. Different people spoke funny. They talked like ducks!

People started learning the Lao language in Nam Tue. There was school in Nam Tue, and if the family could spare the children they could go to school.

Rice was supplied for new people until they could grow their own. They also gave bread and some vegetables. French bread. We had never had before and no one liked it. We cooked it for the pigs with chopped banana trees. They liked it. I work at the farm. My parents sent my younger brother to school. My older brother was a soldier. He would come home two times a year until he died. My sister and then many more children got sick and died in Nam Tue. Many animals died, too.

Muey Sio spent the rest of her childhood in this USAID-financed settlement. There she lived a life of "permanent temporariness." Describing the tendency for each Mien village to reconstruct a familiar enclave in the more heterogeneous environment of Nam Tue, Muey Sio comments: "Each village picked its own place to build. It's not very good for the Mien people to move to new villages like that. We don't know how to control the spirits if we do like that. That's why many people got sick and died."

Shortly after she got married in 1972, Muey Sio was forced to leave Nam Tue. On New Year's Day 1973, the communist forces captured the resettlement area and burned it to the ground. Until the fall of Laos in 1975, Muey Sio's household moved with six to 10 other Mien families closer to the Mekong River to the village of Huei Orh. That year, Muey Sio and her family crossed the Mekong River into Thailand, where she spent four years in two different refugee camps before being accepted for permanent resettlement in Richmond, California. Muey Sio's description of her flight into Thailand and her refugee camp experiences are representative of the experiences of all of the Mien refugees we

interviewed in Sacramento. Therefore, we close this section of our chapter by quoting at length from Muey Sio's recollections of her struggle to survive in Thailand and to preserve a Mien cultural identity in contemporary California.

> In 1975 many communists came and stayed in our village, and they changed the rules. Nobody liked what they wanted, what they did. They said they wanted all the people in the village to make the farm, grow food and animals and put it all together. You could grow things, but if other people didn't have, you had to share. For the older people, they wouldn't let them stay in their own houses and take care of the grandchildren. They were just scared, so they moved. Many people moved in 1975 . . .
>
> So we crossed the Mekong in 1975. I carried my son in front and all those things on my back. My second son had died when he was 7 months so I only had my first son. We crossed at night in those little boats. Maybe five in a boat. We got to Thailand and we hid in some bushes next to a field and waited until morning. As soon as we went into the Thai village, they asked us for money because if we wanted to enter the refugee camp we had to pay. We borrowed money from my husband's uncle to get into Chiang Saen Camp. Later they moved us to Chiang Kham Camp.
>
> It was very hard to get any money in that camp. Thai people came into the camp and hired people to go work in the tobacco factory. But too many people wanted to go. Also, I had a tiny baby then and my husband was sick for many months, so I stayed in the camp and did embroidery for outside Thai people.
>
> You could work all day and do a small embroidered square for 3.5 or 4 *baht*, and sometimes they didn't even pay you. . . .
>
> It was too hard to stay in the camp forever so we interviewed to come to this country.
>
> In 1979 when we finished the interviews, I had to decide what to take. They said each person could take 20 kilos. We didn't have a scale and we didn't know what they would let us take and what they wouldn't let us take. We left lots of things like baskets and clothes.
>
> Some people came to the United States before, and they sent cassettes. I remember they said we didn't have to take our old clothes. We wouldn't be able to use them. And it's true. We brought lots of clothes, and some we don't use. We wear different clothes here . . .
>
> Some older people worry here about the spirits and the religious ceremonies. If the older men pass away, nobody will know how to do it unless the young children learn how. First they have to learn to read and write Chinese, and then they can learn to do the ceremonies. Now there aren't so many who know how to teach. The one [teacher] they have now in Richmond has 25–30 students. But they're small still, and when they're older, they'll have no time or they won't be interested.
>
> I don't see anybody now who is learning the embroidery. If we're gone, they probably won't know how to do it anymore. The older people worry, but they

can't do anything about it. The young people don't know how to dress, how to put the turban on. They don't want to use those kinds of clothes.

Now the parents make or buy for them. When they get married, probably that's the only time they will wear Mien clothes. I don't know what they'll do with the clothes. Just put in the closet. But they'll always be Mien. Even with no religion, no ceremonies.

THE MIEN OF SACRAMENTO

The historical pattern of movement of the Mien, their relative isolation from Laotian society, their exposure to extreme violence, and multiple settlement dislocations of the Indochinese war and flight to Thailand, provide the larger context for understanding their journey to the U.S. and the adjustment process they face in Sacramento. The majority of the Mien refugees we interviewed arrived in the U.S. in the early 1980s and relocated to Sacramento in 1983. Approximately 25 percent arrived in Sacramento during the mid-to-late 1980s. All of our respondents experienced severe social, economic, and political dislocation after the Pathet Lao takeover in 1975, and eventually fled to Thai refugee camps. One-quarter of our respondents were in the Lao army. Fearing persecution by the new government, they fled soon after the Communist victory. The minority of Mien who were small merchants and shop owners lost business as Mien and Laotians left the cities because of the war. They also suffered economic losses because of currency changes implemented by the new government. The majority of our respondents who were farmers in the mountains experienced multiple dislocations between 1975-79 in Laos before fleeing to Thailand. For example, one respondent hid in the Laotian jungle for two years before escaping to Thailand.

As all but two of our respondents were male, our findings are based on the interviews with these subjects. In order to enter the household and conduct the interview, our male Mien interviewer thought it was both necessary and more fruitful to talk to the "official [male] head" of the household. As we shall see, however, the Mien family is undergoing changes with regard to traditional roles, as a number of our male respondents conceded that their spouses now hold equal responsibility in supporting the household in the U.S. The ages of our respondents ranged from 26 to 65. Education ranged from five respondents with no formal education to two respondents with high school diplomas. The average level of education was 3.7 years. All of our male respondents were married with children. Family size was generally medium to large, ranging from one to seven children, with an average of 4.1.

Perhaps our most significant finding was that 68 percent, or over two-thirds of the Mien refugees we interviewed, were unemployed. Thus, it was not surprising that the majority of Mien refugees in our study relied heavily on public assistance. Given this finding, it was important to locate the factors and conditions that would help account for the differential adjustment of Mien refugees in Sacramento. Our research revealed important differences between working and unemployed Mien with regard to social backgrounds, the intergenerational transmission of occupational skills, education, and time spent in refugee

camps. Given these initial differences, several distinctive patterns emerged between working and unemployed Mien with regard to social service use and expectations, experience with ESL and job training programs, and the ability to deal with family transformations.

To highlight these distinctive patterns, we will discuss our findings on the social backgrounds, experiences, and actions of the unemployed and then the employed Mien to illustrate how the differences between and the conditions facing the two groups have shaped their actions, adjustment process, and settlement in Sacramento.

The Unemployed Mien

Backgrounds and Camp Experiences

A general finding of our study thus far is that people from rural backgrounds with the least knowledge of or experience with Western, urbanized culture face a more difficult adjustment process in contemporary California than those with some familiarity with urban life. The Mien were no different. Those who were unemployed tended to originate from smaller villages and hamlets in the mountains of Laos than those who were employed. Thirty-seven percent of the unemployed Mien originally were from locales of less than 1,000 people; 31 percent were from villages of less than 500 people, and one family was from a village of 45 inhabitants. These people were not only unfamiliar with any form of Western culture, but also remained fairly isolated from mainstream Laotian society. The next-largest group, 37 percent, were from locales of under 20,000 inhabitants. In contrast, the majority of the employed Mien in our study were from locales of 10,000 or more inhabitants.

The more significant related factors affecting adjustment are the occupational and educational backgrounds of our respondents, the "social capital" and skills that potentially could be transferred or adapted to employment in the U.S. The majority of the unemployed Mien we interviewed were farmers in the mountains of Laos, growing corn and rice on land owned by the government. As our respondents reported, Laotian officials paid little attention to their use of government land until the Communist takeover in 1975, indicating the difficulty of working the land and the small yields produced in the mountainous region. In addition to crops, our respondents raised livestock to barter for money, clothing, and household items; several of them traveled to the lowlands to barter with Laotians there. The majority of farmers also raised poppies to sell to merchants for opium production to supplement their income.

The unemployed Mien held several other occupations in addition to farming. Two had been timber workers employed by the companies where their fathers had worked. Three were craftsmen, two of them blacksmiths and one a silver/goldsmith. Only two of the unemployed respondents were merchants in Laos, owning and operating small mini-marts. One respondent was a soldier in the Laotian army, and one farmer later joined the army.

Formal education among the unemployed Mien was low, ranging from four respondents with no formal education to one who had completed sixth grade in a Thai refugee camp. The average level of education was 2.3 years. In contrast, the majority of the employed Mien had five or more years of education, with two respondents graduating from high school.

Given their relative isolation and remoteness from Laotian society, which of course helped to insulate and preserve Mien culture as well as restrict their opportunities for educational and occupational advancement, it was not surprising that there was a high rate of intergenerational transmission of occupational skill among the Mien. Thus, all but one farmer among the unemployed Mien were sons of farmers, passing on the techniques of slash-and-burn agriculture from one generation to another. Two of the three craftsmen were sons of craftsmen. Only the two former merchants among the unemployed Mien experienced mobility from their fathers' occupation of farming.

Thus, the unemployed Mien possessed few skills that were transferable or even readily adaptable to employment in the U.S. Although the majority who were farmers in Laos had been able to support themselves and their families at a subsistence level, particularly if they had grown poppies to supplement their income, their skills in slash-and-burn agriculture were hardly adaptable to the technological requirements of California's agribusiness. Moreover, a number of the farmers we interviewed who wanted to farm in California were shocked at the amount of capital required to start a small farming operation. Several of our respondents had lowered their aspirations, seeking fieldwork in strawberry farming, labor-intensive work that requires great individual care in planting, cultivating, and harvesting. Only the two respondents who were small merchants in Laos, as well as the goldsmith, possessed any entrepreneurial experience. Like the rest of our respondents, however, they lacked the capital to start a small business in the U.S.

Before arriving in the U.S., every Mien refugee in our study had spent time in a refugee camp in Thailand, ranging from one to 10 years. The camp experience thus represents a significant condition shaping the personal biographies and group history of the Mien refugees. The unemployed Mien tended to have spent more time in a camp than the employed respondents: half of the unemployed respondents spent five years or more and over a quarter spent eight years or more in a camp, compared to all but two of the employed Mien, who spent four years or less in a camp. Thus, the unemployed Mien in our study had spent more time than the working Mien in a protracted state of dislocation before arriving in the U.S.

Fleeing Laos with other families from their respective villages, often in the middle of the night, the Mien who trekked to Thai camps across the Mekong River took approximately 11 days to two weeks by boat. As they arrived with no money and few possessions, they were provided with housing and food for subsistence. Schooling was available for children and some craft training for adults. Little or no medical care was available. Given the extensive time our unemployed respondents spent in a camp, a number of them began to rely on their own skills or ingenuity to acquire money. One respondent, a former merchant, started a small minimarket in the camp. A former blacksmith opened a noodle shop. A goldsmith sold jewelry in the camp while his wife sewed and sold dresses. The wife of a former timber worker also made and sold dresses in their camp. One enterprising young man completed sixth grade in the camp, acquired training in silversmithing, and sent his jewelry to an aunt to sell in the U.S., making $400–$500 a month. One respondent who spent 15 years in Thailand operated a small mini-mart during his first five years in the camp, then left the camp with his family to work on a nearby farm, growing cotton and

corn. When the Thai government prohibited them from farming because they were not citizens, they returned to their camp for another two years before migrating to the U.S.

In addition to testing the Mien's survival skills, the camps also became networks where information was exchanged and social relationships formed. These relationships would become reactivated in the U.S. and were often instrumental in the selection of Sacramento for resettlement: the majority of the unemployed Mien refugees said they had relocated to Sacramento because of other Mien people and friends living there; half of these respondents reported they had known their Sacramento friends and neighbors in the Thai camps.

In the camps the Mien refugees also exchanged information they received from resettled relatives and friends about life in the U.S., which influenced their decision to migrate. One respondent told us he originally planned to remain in the Thai camp until it was safe to return to Laos, until he learned in camp "that U.S.A. was the best country for us and our children." Several other respondents reported they had learned that the Mien who had resettled in the U.S. "were doing well and it was a better place to live," and "that the U.S. is a very good country." Interestingly, three of our respondents disclosed that they had first learned about the availability of U.S. government assistance and community services for Mien refugees while living in a camp. One of these respondents learned about specific services available in Sacramento from his brother, who had resettled there. The importance of this awareness in deciding to relocate was evidenced in the fact that availability of government assistance was the third most-frequently cited reason by our unemployed respondents for resettling in Sacramento, following reunification with Mien people and friends and family reunification.

Work and Social Service Use As Survival Strategies

The majority of the unemployed Mien in our study were sponsored by the United States Catholic Conference or World Relief Resettlement Agency as well as a close relative such as a sibling, child, uncle or aunt. More than half of the unemployed respondents relocated to Sacramento after arriving in the U.S.; the rest came directly to Sacramento. Our respondents initially received temporary shelter, clothing, food, and a cash payment of approximately $1,000 from their sponsoring agency. All reported that during their initial settlement they relied heavily on their individual sponsor, who was a relative or a close friend, to find housing, medical care and social services, and to introduce them to the mechanics of daily living. Since none of our unemployed respondents spoke English, they also relied on a sponsor, close friend, or interpreter when available for translation services, especially when dealing with social service providers.

As the unemployed respondents in our study were a varied group with regard to age, family size, and responsibility, they used various strategies with regard to work, social services, and job training for survival. A common characteristic, however, was their inability to speak English: of 19 respondents, nine reported that they understood very little English and the rest had no ability to speak it. Another common feature was that none of the unemployed respondents had spouses who spoke English or were working, and a number reported that their wives did not know how to drive a car. Thus, the unemployed men were deeply involved in the domestic care of children, transporting them to school, to the doctor, to the grocery, or any other activity that required transportation. Their

involvement in family and child care was an important factor influencing their decision and ability to work. Moreover, only four of the unemployed respondents lived with elderly parents who could provide babysitting services. As we shall see, this distinguishes them from the employed Mien, who could rely on the assistance of elderly parents collecting SSI who were able to share child-care responsibilities.

Given their unemployment, our respondents relied heavily on government assistance for which they were eligible, including AFDC (SSI for older respondents), food stamps, and Medi-Cal. The overwhelming majority, however, had job aspirations and expressed a strong desire to find work. Because they arrived with few transferable skills, our respondents were altering their original job aspirations and were seeking out and using the services available to acquire new skills. For example, upon realizing the amount of capital needed to operate even a small farm, several of the former farmers were now seeking employment as agricultural workers. Younger respondents in their 30s and 40s, after completing the ESL classes in which they were enrolled, planned to take job training classes in auto mechanics and machine shop work.

Not all of the unemployed respondents lacked work experience. Four had held jobs at their initial place of settlement (one had held five jobs), primarily as dishwashers and janitors. Their initial jobs, however, did not pay enough to enable them to support their families, or did not include the medical benefits that were crucial for those with young children. These respondents decided to relocate to Sacramento to reunite with other family members, as well as to utilize available services for support and advancement, as one described below:

> We did not receive any government assistance when we first came to the USA. My brother was working since he came to the USA. He only received three months free housing from his sponsor. He worked until June 1988. I was expected to work when my family first arrived in Norton, Kansas. I was working as a janitor for the church for about three months. . . . My brother decided to move to Sacramento because there was no medical insurance for his family from work. He did not make enough money to support his family either. We had some friend who was living in Sacramento at that time. They were receiving public assistance. We found that there was more government resources to help my family. My brother and I decide to come to Sacramento area to join our friends. My brother and I came to Sacramento first. We found a house for my and his family. Then we went back to Norton, Kansas to get our family. . . . There was no ESL school nor government agency [in Norton] that can help my family like Sacramento.

Similarly, three respondents were offered employment in janitorial and nursery wor[1], but the wages were insufficient to support their families. Accepting a full-time job with low wages also meant forfeiting all the benefits for which they were eligible, including Medi-Cal coverage. Although they preferred to work if medical benefits were included, our respondents opted to remain on welfare to insure crucial health coverage for their families. As one explained:

> The Baptist church in Pomona offered me a janitor job, but I refused to accept it because I could not make enough money to support my family . . . I have

> seven children. I cannot get a job that will pay $1,300 per month because I never have any skills and language ability. Even if I make $1,300 at work, I may not get the medical insurance to cover my family of nine people. . . . Medical assistance make a big difference to my family.

The biggest obstacle our unemployed respondents faced in obtaining employment was their lack of English speaking ability. Realizing that lack of English hindered their adjustment process and skill acquisition, half of our respondents were enrolled in or had taken ESL classes. Six of our respondents in their 30s and 40s were enrolled in ESL classes when we interviewed them and, upon completion, were planning to take job training classes provided by the GAIN program to become mechanics or machine shop operators. One former goldsmith was planning to become a jeweler after acquiring English language skills. Thus, these younger respondents were taking advantage of the services available, particularly the GAIN program, to help equip them with employable skills.

Of the four respondents who had previously taken ESL classes, two in their 50s and 60s failed to complete their courses, citing health reasons and difficulty in learning the language. Two younger respondents did not complete their courses because of child care demands. Similarly, of the nine respondents who had not taken ESL classes, five were in their late 50s and early to mid-60s. Of the four remaining respondents in their 40s, three reported that they planned to enroll in ESL classes when their children were a little older. In the meanwhile, they remained at home to assist their wives, who did not spéak English or drive, and one of whom had health problems, with child-rearing responsibilities. The fourth respondent was being sent to ESL class by his GAIN worker.

Perhaps the most significant and startling finding with regard to the unemployed respondents — and in marked contrast to the working Mien — is that not one who had taken or was currently enrolled in ESL class had a bilingual instructor or teacher's assistant who spoke Mien or Laotian. This lack of bilingual instructors helps to explain why, although the majority of unemployed Mien we interviewed had been in the U.S. for nine years or more, with half enrolling in ESL training, they were neither fluent in nor had a functional command of English. As the ability to speak English was such a crucial element in the adjustment of all the groups we studied, especially in obtaining employable skills, ineffective language training has slowed the integration and impeded the advancement of the unemployed Mien. Effective language training is particularly critical in the case of the Mien, who, of all the groups in our study, have traversed the greatest distances with regard to cultural traditions, work skills, and language structure.

Their high rate of unemployment has led to a heavy reliance on government services. Although all of our respondents expressed gratitude for the assistance they received, they also expressed mixed feelings toward welfare and were extremely self-conscious about their continued use of public assistance. With little education, few adaptable skills, and little or no ability to speak English, they felt they had no choice but to use public assistance for survival and adjustment. Older Mien respondents in their late 50s and 60s saw few employment possibilities or even the opportunity to acquire employable skills, as reported by this 58-year-old respondent:

> Because [my wife and I] have no formal education and job skill, the public assistance is very helpful. We were unable to find a job because the language, job skill and our age.

Our younger respondents, particularly those with young children, viewed their use of public assistance as a temporary condition, providing the means to equip themselves with language and job skills to achieve self-sufficiency while helping them to support their families. Nevertheless, they also expressed dissatisfaction with their dependency, preferring work to welfare, as described respectively by these 32-year-old and 40-year-old respondents:

> Receiving welfare is very helpful to my family, but we don't have enough money to spend. I am going to school to study English. My wife does not speak English nor can she drive a car. Therefore, the welfare is our only choice. I hope I will get a job soon so we can get off welfare.

> It creates a hardship when receiving public assistance, but one thing is good . . . the medical assistance. I'd rather work if I can find another job.

Interestingly, over one-half of our unemployed respondents expected to receive assistance upon arriving in the U.S., having learned about the availability of social services in either their camps, from resettled relatives and friends, and/or their sponsors. The overwhelming majority of our respondents viewed public assistance as a privilege and a necessity, however, stating that recipients must be extremely responsible in abiding by the eligibility criteria and rules regulating assistance. One respondent confided that he became very upset when he learned about welfare abuse, stating that he and his family remain within the law, carefully abiding by the eligibility rules and regulations.

Our respondents were also well aware of negative, American mainstream attitudes regarding public assistance, which they were evidently internalizing given the conflict they experienced between viewing welfare as their only immediate option and their desire for self-sufficiency. Negative opinions and judgments concerning use of public assistance were particularly difficult for older respondents, who had little hope for self-sufficiency and were experiencing the health problems and frailties associated with aging, as described by this 62-year-old with diabetes:

> I was told by some Caucasian through the interpreter that they were not happy because we are collecting welfare and they are working so hard to earn their money. . . . Receiving public assistance is not a good example for our children, but we do not have any choice because of lack of work and skill.

For our younger respondents, similarly, reliance on public assistance has resulted in feelings of internal conflict and self-reprobation, as their traditional role of family provider was challenged by their dependent situation. These feelings were exacerbated by our respondents' concerns about the example they were setting for their children, who were being criticized by their school peers for their families' use of public assistance, as disclosed by these respondents:

> Receiving public assistance is not a good example for our children, but we do not have any other choice. . . . I know and [am] aware that my two son don't like

to be on welfare because their American friend from school try to criticize them about welfare program.

I speak no English, I do not have any skills and I have never work in this country. My son had told me about his friend from school criticized him of receiving AFDC. Sometime I feel that is not fair because my entire family receive welfare, but we have no choice.

Family Transformations and Generational Conflict

As the above statements indicate, in addition to the challenge of acquiring the basic skills to survive in a strange new culture, our respondents also faced pressures and challenges from the new society concerning their traditional family and gender roles. Although all of our respondents acknowledged that the position, roles, and expectations of women in their new society were very different from those in traditional Mien culture, their reactions varied as to how they viewed these changes affecting their families. For example, our older respondents in their 50s and 60s were well aware of these differences, as described by this 62-year-old respondent: "In the U.S., both husband and wife have equal right, power. In my country, the man always has more power than the wife."

A 58-year-old respondent concurred by stating that expectations in the U.S. concerning the roles of women and men, especially in marriage, were totally different in Mien society, particularly for members of his generation. Yet, this acknowledgment of the differences in gender relations between the two cultures did not necessarily connote openness or receptivity to the new culture's expectations and opportunities for women. Rather, the older respondents more typically felt that the role expectations for women in the U.S. were more salient for and would need to be worked out by the younger generation as opposed to their age group, whose relationships were established by years of experience, as described by this 54-year-old respondent: "I think it is different for my children but I don't think it make any difference for me and my wife because we are getting old."

Similarly, our younger respondents acknowledged the differences in gender roles between Mien society and their new culture, perceiving women to have "equal rights and responsibilities" in the U.S. Several were very receptive toward the expanded role for women in the U.S., favorably viewing the assistance they could expect to receive from their spouses in sharing the support of their families. In addition, several respondents were enthusiastic about the increased opportunities available for their spouses' education and self-development, as expressed by this 30-year-old respondent:

In Thailand refugee camp, I always had a greater responsibility than my wife. Now, my wife seem to do something that she could not do when she was in Thailand refugee camp. For example, she was unable to go to school, meet new friends and leave the house or go shopping because the child care problem. She would be able to go to school, shopping and meet new friend in Sacramento. We take turn going to school. I go to school in the morning, and my wife goes to school in the evening.

The receptivity displayed by our younger respondents toward changing gender relations in the U.S., based on individual openness and bicultural awareness, can also be placed in the context of their situation. For our unemployed respondents, depending on social services and struggling to adjust in their new society, the prospect of receiving assistance from their spouses in sharing the burden of family support offered hope and assurance that survival would become easier in the future. At the same time, given that the spouses of our unemployed respondents were also unemployed, spoke no English, and few were enrolled in bilingual education classes, the men and women had yet to deal with the opportunities and constraints presented when the women began to move out of the household and into the expanded roles of the public sphere.

Interestingly, for our unemployed respondents, generational conflict with children appeared to be the more pressing, and was the more frequently cited, issue than conflict with changing gender roles. Not surprisingly, all of our unemployed respondents placed their greatest hopes for the future on their children. When asked what their dreams and goals were for their children, the response was universal: to get an education and obtain a good job. A number of respondents also stated that they wanted their children "to have a good family" and "to become wealthy," indicating the traditional value placed on children, as well as material success, which is linked to their ability to practice their spiritual beliefs. In fact, one of the primary reasons our Mien respondents decided to migrate to the U.S. and endure the sacrifices that it entailed was for their children's future, as described by this 41-year-old father:

> I hoping my children will get a good education and get a good job and good family for themselves. I hope that they won't live like what we have been through in the past. I hope that they won't forget where we came from, and I hope that they won't lose all of our cultural background.
>
> One other reason we came the U.S. was to search freedom and better education for our children. I hope they will get what we wanted them to get.

The high value placed on children in Mien culture and concern for their children's welfare was evidenced in the behavior of a number of our younger respondents who, as described earlier, were willing to sacrifice their immediate future by putting off language and job training to share the child-rearing duties with their spouses.

The Mien expressed great concern over their children's exposure to the openness of their new society, as did our Vietnamese respondents. Although the majority said it was easier to raise children in the U.S. because of economic resources, with seven of our respondents saying they were raising their children as Mien and Americans, they qualified their responses by stating that it was more difficult to control and discipline their children in the U.S. In their perception, traditional expectations of filial respect and authority were not as valued in American society as in their culture, as described by this respondent:

> In our country, it was easy to raise children because we had our way to discipline our children. They will listen to us better, and they treat and respect the parent. On other hand, the Mien children grow-up in the U.S.A., some of them, do not respect their parents. Some children end up become a gang members, on

drug and become juvenile delinquent. . . . Children and parent conflict is one of the big issue we have in the Mien community today.

Unemployed parents felt particularly disadvantaged in dealing with the education system and their children's performance and behavior in school. They expressed great frustration over their inability to help their children with homework problems because they did not speak English, and complained that they did not understand what was going on in school because they could not communicate with their children's teachers. Although the majority of parents reported that their children either had a bilingual teacher or teaching assistant, those who attended school meetings reported that the school did not provide interpreters for parent-teacher conferences. Parents who did not attend school functions cited their inability to understand English, while several parents, in accordance with their culture, stated that they did not attend school meetings because their children's teachers did not invite them.

Perhaps the greatest frustration parents expressed was that they felt uninformed when their children were experiencing problems at school, especially when teachers sent the children home without explanation, as reported by this respondent: "I think that the school or teacher should let us know what's going on when they send our kids home. They never did in the past."

Similarly, another father, whose children were having behavioral problems in school, when asked whether he was satisfied with his children's education, bluntly replied: "I am not but there is not much I can do to help because I don't speak English. I can not [do anything] because most of the time the school did not inform us what's going on."

The difficulties the unemployed parents were experiencing with the school and their children's performance revealed a larger parent/child communication problem they were worried about or experiencing. Generational communication problems that most parents and children experienced at one time or another were heightened in the case of the unemployed Mien by their situation of dependency, lack of English speaking skills, and unfamiliarity with American institutions. In addition, children were beginning to acclimate more quickly than their parents, particularly with regard to learning English and gaining cultural familiarity, placing parents at a disadvantage in supervising their children's exposure to the conflicting expectations of Mien culture and American society. This was movingly expressed by one father who was experiencing serious conflict with two of his children as he himself struggled to adjust to and deal with the institutions of his new culture:

> My two older children are having a conflict with us. They lost most of our cultural respect and the value. They are very Americanize. My oldest daughter ran away from hom[e] several times. She cuts school all the time. She does not listen to us anymore. My son also being disobedience. He and his friend committed auto theft twice last year. We are trying to get help from the school, but we do not speak English well enough to communicate with them. Our children are smarter than us, so, they refuse to listen to us.
>
> When my daughter ran away from home, we reported to the police; however, the police department did not do anything for us. We were unable to communicate with them due to the language.

The gravest concern voiced by our unemployed respondents was their children's exposure to drugs and youth gangs. In fact, a universal response expressed by our unemployed respondents was their fear of "crime, drugs, and gangs." Instead of experiencing security in their new culture, this highly vulnerable group had fears that were exacerbated by their perceptions of the criminal justice system. The majority of our respondents expressed dissatisfaction with and mistrust of the juvenile justice system, citing the cultural conflict between the Mien tradition for disciplining children and the legal precept of the U.S. juvenile justice system, which prohibits the physical punishment of children. Moreover, cultural conflict and consequent misunderstandings have been aggravated by the inability of both groups to communicate with one another, as described by this respondent:

> Raising children in U.S. can be difficult because the cultural conflict. When the children grow-up, they seem to reject from their parent because the language and economics and we are unable to discipline our children like we did in our country. When we discipline our children the authorities consider that a child abuse. If we do not discipline them, they will be bad and run away with other. Juvenile delinquent is a big issue for the Mien community. We hope that the government can provide us with more information with bilingual language.

As the above respondent makes clear, there is an urgent need for greater understanding and sensitivity toward each other's culture on the part of both Mien and native-born residents, which needs to begin with bilingual communication.

The Working Mien:
Similarities and Differences

The differences between the Mien who were unemployed and those who were working prompted us to ask the following questions: What types of employment were found by the Mien who have found work? How important were their social background characteristics and their experiences with public and private agencies in moving them from dependence on welfare support to gainful employment? How did they find the work they are doing? Is their employment enabling them to achieve economic self-sufficiency? What has been their experience with the bureaucracies intended to move them along the trajectory from welfare to work — namely, income support, English language acquisition, and employment training programs linked to GAIN? What do they believe helped them most in finding work, learning English, and moving toward economic self-sufficiency? How are they different from or similar to the two-thirds of our sample of Mien men who remain dependent on public assistance in such key dimensions of refugee adaptation as their reasons for moving to their present city; their trajectory for learning English; their expectations of, use of, and experiences with public assistance programs; their awareness of, use of, and active social participation in community organizations; their accommodation or resistance to changing gender roles in contemporary California; and their view of intergenerational conflict and accommodation within the Mien community?

The jobs found by the Mien males in our Sacramento sample, with one exception — an unskilled worker who is a kitchen helper in a Chinese restaurant — are in three types

of work: professional employment as bilingual interpreters, in the skilled crafts, or as self-employed small businessmen. The three professional translators work for two of Sacramento's largest public-sector employers: the Sacramento Unified School District and the University of California Davis Medical Center. The skilled craftspersons include a jeweler, a tailor, and a television and stereo equipment assembler. The self-employed Mien include the co-owner of an Asian grocery store and a mechanic who repairs autos part-time at his or his customers' house and hopes eventually to open his own auto repair shop. The incomes of the four full-time workers range from $8.90 an hour in the case of the tailor, to $2,300 a month in the case of the electronics assembler. Two of the part-time workers, the kitchen helper and one of the bilingual teaching assistants, receive relatively low pay, $600 and $450 a month, respectively. Although the auto repairman and the grocery store owner both describe themselves as working only part-time, the former earns between $2,000 and $3,000 a month, the latter between $3,000 and $4,500 a month. The part-time jeweler, who plans to open his own jewelry store, was earning $1,500 a month when we conducted this study.

While the employed Mien differ in several salient respects from their unemployed counterparts, the most striking differences have to do with their social background characteristics and experiences. A sizable majority of the employed in our sample were more urbanized and educated, and had past personal and occupational experiences that gave them more easily transferable skills than those possessed by the more typical Mien highland farmers, most of whom remain on public assistance. Only one of the employed Mien came from a small village with a population of less than 1,000. As many as 44 percent came from cities ranging in population size from 15,000 to 150,000. Another 33 percent grew up in towns of between 5,000 and 10,000 people. Similarly, only one of the employed respondents had no schooling in Laos. Seven of the nine had been educated in Laos or Thailand, ranging from fifth grade to completion of high school. The vast majority were multilingual. In addition to their Mien language, eight of the nine were literate in Laotian, and three of the nine also spoke Chinese. Six of the nine became fluent in the Thai language while living in Thai refugee camps.

A related background characteristic that reveals a difference between the employed and the welfare-dependent Mien in Sacramento is the time spent in refugee camps. Seven of the nine employed Mien we interviewed spent four years or less in a refugee camp, whereas 50 percent of the unemployed spent five years or more in a camp. As we have seen, however, the time spent there had double-edged possibilities. While the older Mien males often did not replace their Laotian means of subsistence in slash-and-burn agriculture by learning any skills or abilities that might prove useful in California, some of the younger Mien in each group acquired literacy in Thai and Laotian and received several years of formal schooling in Thailand.

As a group, the employed Mien in our sample tended to be younger than the unemployed. Fifty-six percent of the employed were children or young teenagers when they left Laos and are now in their 20s in Sacramento. Only one employed respondent is over 50. In contrast, none of our unemployed respondents are in their 20s and 37 percent are over 50. Given this age distribution, in examining the occupational backgrounds of the Mien who were employed we considered both the actual occupational experiences of those

who had worked in Laos and the fathers' occupations in the case of those who were quite young when their families fled Laos.

For comparison, it is important to recall that 74 percent of the unemployed Mien respondents were doing manual labor, either as farmers or as timber workers. Only two of the 19 Mien who remain dependent on public assistance had social backgrounds as small business owners. Virtually the opposite is true of the employed Mien: two-thirds had past entrepreneurial experience, either by owning a small business or working in a family business owned by their fathers. Only three had family backgrounds in farming. Those who owned their own businesses included the owner of a tailor shop, a self-employed goldsmith, and the owner of two grocery stores, who volunteered that he had owned five houses in Laos before he fled. Those whose fathers had past ownership experiences include owners of a mini-mart, two coffee shops, and a jewelry store, all in medium-size cities.

This pattern of small business experience tended to be transmitted intergenerationally. For example, the father of the tailor shop owner was a travelling businessman; the goldsmith's parents owned a wholesale fabric shop; the owner of the coffee shop had worked in his father's business. To engage in entrepreneurial activity in the urban market economy required enough formal education to acquire fluency in the market language of the lowland Lao, an initial advantage possessed by all members of the Laotian small business class in our sample. Subsequently they were able to transfer this advantage to new contexts in acquiring fluency in Thai and eventually English, a language which all nine of the employed Mien in our Sacramento sample can speak and in which seven are fully literate.

Why did these men choose to migrate to Sacramento? They came in a secondary migration from other parts of the state or nation for generally the same reasons given by the unemployed Mien. Of the nine who were employed, five mentioned "more Mien," five mentioned "family reunification," three the high rents and cost of living elsewhere, two "to join friends," two to obtain better service from government and community agencies. One respondent, the grocery store owner, said he came to Sacramento because he found a better job there in partnership with another Asian co-owner.

When the working Mien we interviewed arrived in the U.S., six expected to work and only two of the nine expected to receive welfare assistance. Nevertheless, all nine eventually sought and accepted public assistance in various forms (AFDC, Medi-Cal, food stamps, GAIN) for a period ranging from two to four years. All but one, who still qualifies for Medi-Cal, are no longer receiving any form of public assistance. They also took extensive advantage of the various ESL, bilingual education, and job training programs to which they were referred by GAIN workers. As noted above, seven are now fully literate in English and two others have a reasonable command of spoken English. When asked what helped them most in learning English, they provided an array of reasons which speak well for the language acquisition programs they were fortunate enough to find. Six of the nine mentioned "good tutoring" as most helpful to them. Four credited a bilingual instructor who spoke Mien. Three mentioned the "good teacher" in the ESL program. Only one mentioned a factor not related to the instructor, his own hard work, or the quality of the language program: extensive interaction with English-speaking people in everyday life was most helpful to him.

Six of the nine Mien who successfully used welfare support to learn English also took advantage of the job training programs available through GAIN referrals. The three who did not were the self-employed grocery store owner, the tailor, and the unskilled kitchen helper. The six who received training included three trained in clerical/data processing skills, two in auto repair, one in electronics, and one as an interpreter. All but one of these, the jeweler who already had a skill, found the training useful in their present occupation.

The working Mien gave two frequent responses to our question, "How did you find each job you have had?": referral by a school and referral by a friend, each mentioned by 56 percent of the respondents. Only three other responses to this open-ended question were given: job announcements, referral by the California Department of Social Services, and the newspaper. Each of these was mentioned by one respondent. When asked the more general open-ended question, "What is the best way to find a job in Sacramento?" the employed Mien gave more diverse responses and revealed an extensive awareness of available options. In descending order, they included: the newspaper (44 percent), the county job line, referral by a job-training agency, and referral by a community organization (33 percent each); and school referral (22 percent).

As a group, the employed Mien are definitely moving in the direction of economic self-sufficiency and social integration into California's multicultural society. Six of the nine men either own or are now buying their own home. All but one are living in neighborhoods of mixed race and ethnicity. All have a number of non-Mien friends, including Lao, American, Hmong, Vietnamese, and Chinese, in descending order. Four of the nine said they had many American friends; three others had a few American friends. Only two of these respondents did not include any Americans among their non-Mien friends. None works in an all-Mien ethnic enclave.

The employed Mien in our sample are well aware of community organizations, and some are quite active in Sacramento organizations that count the Mien refugees among their clientele. Two are involved in the leadership of a center that assists Indochinese people, and three have casual or active leadership roles in an association that focuses on Sacramento's Mien community. They expressed confidence and trust in some community organizations offering services to the Mien, but lack of confidence and trust in one organization whose programs and activities they have not found useful.

As noted above, six of the employed Mien were urbanized and enjoyed considerable initial advantages in adapting to American life and achieving economic self-sufficiency. Despite these initial advantages, the transferability of their skills to California has been neither easy nor immediate. Their adaptation has been extensively mediated for two to four or more years by the major public and private institutions that link public social support to Mien refugees in the United States with educational and training institutions, community organizations, English language acquisition programs, and the metropolitan labor market. Perhaps not surprisingly, these institutional structures, linking state and market, have operated quite well in transferring economic self-sufficiency to the most potentially well-equipped entrepreneurial segment of the Mien population.

A more surprising finding is that these public and private institutions have managed to successfully assist some rural highlanders to acquire English-language proficiency and find stable employment. How have these time travellers managed to achieve integration into

the present less-than-robust economy? How, if at all, do the institutional encounters between the few successful men who were highland farmers and California's welfare, educational, and employment systems differ from the more typical experiences of the welfare-dependent farmers we examined earlier? How do they differ from the previously urbanized working Mien? The following stories of Kao, Saeng, and Seng, our three Mien subjects who have travelled the farthest in time, shed important light on these questions.

The Time Travelers

Kao

Like most Mien highland children, Kao never went to school in Laos. He worked in the fields with his parents growing poppies, rice, and corn for income, and raising animals for barter. Kao left Laos with his parents, a sister, and four other Mien families quite suddenly in September 1975 following the Communist victory. When asked why they left Laos, Kao replied straightforwardly:

> My parents did not like the Communists. Many other Mien also left the village. Everything was changed when the Communists took over. The Communists came to our village and took our animals and stopped my parents from working in the field. The Communist soldiers were going to draft me to the service [he was 14]. My parents were scared. So we decided to escape from this village.

Kao went immediately to a refugee camp in Thailand, where he spent seven years. He views the experience ambivalently because it disempowered his parents while empowering him. Kao explains:

> We went to Thailand Refugee Camp in September 1975. My parent stopped working. We was supported by the Thai government in the camp until we came to USA. I had a chance to go to school in the Refugee Camp. I was able to completed fifth grade in Thai school. My parents did not do anything to earned money. My father was voluntary to help the Thai government to built the building in the camp for other refugee people to live. The refugee camp that we lived in was mixed with Hmong, Laotian, Khamu and Mien people. After I finished school, I went to work for the hospital in the camp. I was a public health nurses' assistance until we came to the USA.

Upon arrival in Portland, Oregon, in September 1982, Kao expected to work. The next spring, however, his family moved to Sacramento so that Kao's father could reunite with his brother. With the assistance of Kao's uncle, the family applied for and received the usual array of public assistance available to legal refugees: AFDC cash assistance, food stamps, and Medi-Cal. Kao remained on public assistance for three years while learning English and receiving skilled work training. He learned English by taking three years of ESL classes at the Sacramento Adult School, to which he had been referred by a social worker under the GAIN program. Although his teacher was not bilingual, Kao's program did have a study aide who provided individualized bilingual help. By working very hard and seeking help from the study aide, he managed to learn English under these circumstanc-

es. In his words: "I went to the library all the time for help. Study aide was the most helpful to me when learning English."

Through GAIN Kao was referred to the Sacramento Employment Training Center, which prepared him to become an auto mechanic, and helped him start his emergent business. He now works part-time repairing cars at his home or at a customer's house, earning between $2,000 and $3,000 a month. He recently bought a house in a mixed residential neighborhood where he lives with his wife and four children. His wife also works, and he hopes to open his own auto repair shop in the near future.

Materially, Kao is doing better than all but one of the employed Mien in our study. Culturally, he is also one of the most assimilated. He no longer practices the household religion, has become a Christian, and is actively involved with his children and his church in Sunday school activities. He uses only a Western medical doctor for health care, and the only holidays he celebrates are Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day. He raises his children "like American people raise their children," and hopes they will set an example for other Mien children in the future by becoming engineers, doctors, or lawyers.

Kao is also the most enthusiastic of any of our respondents about changing gender role expectations in American society. When asked how being married in the U.S. differs from marriage in his home country, Kao replies, "I think it's different because both husband and wife have an equal opportunity to compete, whatever they want to do. I like the way we are now. We both can make decisions and we both have equal responsibility in the family." Kao is equally positive about the renegotiation of the head-of-household role that has occurred in his new setting. In answer to the question, "Who is head of household in your family," Kao replied:

> My wife and I are the head of the household. It used to be my father, but he is getting too old. We are living in the different society. We changed the way we live in Laos or Thailand. For now, either my wife or myself can be a head of household. If I am not home, my wife would be in charge of the family. If I am home, I in charge of the family. I think this way it work out better than before.

Although Kao is sometimes homesick, he would not go back to Laos if given the opportunity because "it's better here." He expresses unqualified enthusiasm for virtually every aspect of life in America except drugs, crime and the gang problems, and that related *bête noire*, "the American criminal justice system." Interestingly, Kao's only conflictual response has to do with the welfare support which, through GAIN, gave him the vocational training for the marketable skill he is now practicing. When asked how he felt about receiving these services, Kao responded:

> I did not feel comfortable when my family were receiving AFDC. I had many friends from school asked me to look for a job when I was in training. Some of the Caucasian students even criticized myself and my family of receiving free money. I felt very angry, but I did not say anything. I knew that I had no choice.

Saeng

Saeng is the second Mien time traveller in our study who has moved, in little over a decade, from preindustrial, slash-and-burn agriculture in Laos to English language mastery

and gainful employment in late 20th century California. When Saeng first arrived in the United States in the fall of 1980 he went to Pomona, California. He and his family had left Laos in May 1979, after spending approximately one and a half years in a Thai refugee camp. His resettlement in Pomona was initially mediated by the International Rescue Committee, which provided his family with financial assistance for two months and helped them locate housing and services. In Laos, Saeng had received only one year of regular schooling in a Laotian school and six months of religiously oriented education in a private Chinese school. Upon arrival in the U.S. he began learning English almost immediately, enrolling in an ESL class in Pomona in January 1981. Saeng became fully literate in English during his three years in Pomona, crediting his success to his teacher and "good support material from the teacher."

In July 1984 Saeng and his family moved to Sacramento, where his family had learned there were more Mien and where his father could reunite with a cousin. With confidence in his command of English, Saeng, who was now 21, enrolled in a regular adult school in Sacramento. In less than five years, Saeng had earned a high school diploma and received advanced training at an adult school in clerical work, data processing, and small business management. Since coming to America, Saeng has held seven different jobs, which he obtained through school referrals, job announcements, and the newspaper. When he completed his training, he worked for two years for the school where he was trained.

Saeng is now employed as a part-time teaching assistant by the Sacramento Unified School district, earning $450 a month. He moonlights as an interpreter for a lawyer and for the State of California on a case-by-case basis. He is managing to support his family on this limited income because his wife has a full-time job. Saeng would like to find a full-time job with benefits in the areas for which he was trained, and eventually hopes to become a real estate broker.

Like all of our Mien subjects, Saeng received public assistance for several years. Unlike most of them, however, he did not rely on his kinship network to obtain information about day-to-day living in Sacramento or about qualifying for government assistance, which he learned of from his school counselor. Saeng regards himself as very self-reliant. In response to our question, "Who was most helpful to you in locating housing, locating a job, locating medical care, and learning about day-to-day living in Sacramento," he simply replied: "I did it all by myself." His attitude toward welfare reflects this self-image of extreme self-reliance. When he was on public assistance for three to four years while improving his English and acquiring job skills, Saeng found living on welfare hard because there was never any money left beyond basic necessities, and it "created a low self-esteem." Nevertheless, he thinks government agencies are better for the Mien in Sacramento than mutual assistance associations, which he found unhelpful, because the former provide needed assistance "to those who have a difficulty living in the USA," a group from which he clearly excludes himself.

Despite Saeng's tendency to distance himself from "other Mien," he has not entirely rejected his past. Rather, Saeng has selectively appropriated the new while retaining elements of Mien tradition. He now raises his children "like the Americans" and hopes they will enter the professions. Although Saeng describes himself as the head of household, he shares equal responsibility with his working wife for household chores. He continues to rely

on spiritual ceremonies performed by his father, who is a shaman, in addition to using the "Western medical doctor." Saeng feels perfectly comfortable with this hybrid form of cultural adaptation. While he bemoans the high cost of living in California and his difficulty in finding a "good full-time job," he would go back to Laos only to visit, if given the opportunity.

Seng

The third Mien time traveler also started out as a traditional farmer in Laos, and is now working full-time as a translator for the University of California Davis Medical Center in Sacramento. He never attended school in Laos, but worked on his parents' farm in the mountains from a very young age. After the fall of Laos, his family did not immediately flee into Thailand. When his father died in 1975, the remaining members of his family moved from place to place for a year and a half trying to survive as farmers. They left Laos in June 1976, because they could not earn enough to survive as farmers and because their uncle, a soldier for the Royal Lao Army, had been sent to prison. They spent four years in a Thai refugee camp before being accepted for resettlement in the United States. Their original destination was Portland, Oregon, where they were sent by the International Rescue Committee. The family decided to move to Sacramento in September 1983 because they had heard that many Mien people lived in Sacramento, and that Sacramento then had a greater number of Southeast Asian resources that could help their family.

Seng was fortunate to have had a bilingual instructor in his ESL classes in Portland in 1980. He notes that the instructor, who could speak both Lao and Mien, helped him to learn English very well — "If I did not understand, I could ask him in my language." He continued in an ESL class in Sacramento with a teacher who did not speak Mien, but was bilingual in Laotian and Chinese. Fortunately for him, he had picked up enough Laotian in Thailand and from his first teacher that this arrangement worked for him, enabling him to progressively improve his English language skills. With this foundation, Seng completed high school, and received nine months of additional training at the Fremont School in clerical work and as an interpreter. As a welfare recipient for three years, Seng was referred to the Fremont School by the state Department of Social Services. He describes his feeling about receiving public assistance in Sacramento this way:

> Receiving public assistance was a temporary choice for my family. I knew that I could get a job and make some money to support my family when I moved to Sacramento. I had no other choice but to apply for AFDC while I was going to school and training. I knew that I did not have more freedom in my financial situation. We did not have enough money to spend each month. We tried very hard to save the money to buy clothes and pay for the rent.

Today, Seng earns $1,900 per month as a hospital translator, has three young children, and owns his own home. He has successfully used the welfare system as a means for acquiring economic self-sufficiency. Materially, he is the embodiment of the American dream, having moved from the bottom of the class structure of Laos to a skilled, white-collar job as a bilingual translator in the United States in a little over a decade. Yet, when viewed culturally, in his own terms, Seng doesn't see himself as having simply moved from the class structure of Laos to that of the U.S. Rather, he occupies a more fluid boundary

of personal meaning and identity, in which he desires *both* professional success and upward social mobility for his young children, *and* preservation of the traditional Mien cultural way of life. Thus, Seng's attitudes about his move to the United States, while generally positive, are clearly not one-sided. For example, in response to the question, "Do you think it is more difficult to raise children in the U.S. than in Laos?" most of our respondents replied that it was easier here because of access to modern medicine, schooling, and public assistance. Although Seng acknowledged these advantages, he also mentioned the bureaucratic restraints on the traditional Mien means of maintaining discipline:

> I think it could be easy and difficult to raise children in the United States. It is easy to raise children in the U.S. because of the Western medical doctor, the economy is better, and the help from the government agencies. On the other hand, it is difficult to raise children because of the cultural conflicts, the rules and regulations. If I discipline my children by using the corporal punishment method, I could be charged as a child abuser. That is what I think it is — cultural conflict.

Seng says he is raising his children differently from the way he was raised, "more like American people," because "I have to adjust to the new society, rules, and regulations." He hopes they will become a doctor, a lawyer, and a caregiver. Nevertheless, he continues to regard himself as the head of his household, which includes his mother and a younger brother, as well as his wife and three children. His wife and mother speak no English and do all of the household chores. Both he and his wife control the household budget. This arrangement resembles the traditional Mien household division of labor described earlier. So, too, does the fact that Seng continues to practice the household religion and, in fact, serves as the household shaman, though he hastens to add, "However, we try the medical doctor first. If the medical doctor does not help, then we use the traditional remedies." Seng is also past president of the Iu-Mien Family Association in Sacramento, one of whose purposes, in addition to providing mutual assistance, is to preserve Mien cultural practices in the new context. Despite his obvious concern for cultural preservation, Seng does not have an enclave mentality. Rather, he has many American, Lao, and Hmong friends that he made at work and in his neighborhood. He is also active as an advisory board member in the Indo-Chinese Assistance Center, whose mutual assistance and community development activities cut across all of the Southeast Asian nationality groups in Sacramento.

The Previously Urbanized Working Mien

The stories of Kao, Saeng, and Seng reveal a complexly mixed pattern of accommodation and resistance to changing gender roles of women in the family and society. How do the six employed Mien who started out with a more urbanized background and greater advantages differ in this respect from those who started out as highland farmers?

An examination of the remaining six employed Mien reveals an interesting difference in rates of adaptation to an enlarged role for women both within and outside the household. Two of the men — the grocery store owner and the kitchen helper — have shown no adaptation to U.S. patterns of gender relations. Neither of these men has a working wife. Both described themselves as the head of household and answered "myself" when asked,

"Who decides how money is spent in your household?" In both instances, all household chores — cooking, cleaning, laundry, and babysitting — are done by their wives, daughters, or sisters.

In contrast, the other four, who have working wives, all share decision-making responsibilities within the household and declare either or both themselves and their wives to be head of household. While these working Mien also participate in doing the household chores, they acknowledge that their wives do more of these chores, particularly cooking. The following excerpts are drawn from the story told by the Mien electronics assembler, and represents the patterns of adaptation of these previously urbanized Mien.

> My wife does not have to depend on me for everything. We both working and raise our children. We both can be the head of the household. If I am away, she would be able to run the household. I always had to be the head of the household in Thailand. She always waited for me to do something. She changed a lot since we come to America. I like the way we work in the U.S. very much. It works out for our family very good.

After declaring that he is raising his children differently from the way his parents raised him, more like American people raise their children, the assembler nevertheless adds the following qualification, indicating his hope for a bicultural future for his children:

> My parent raised me very good too, but it was in different country with different cultural. We are living in a new society today. So, we need to adapt to the new cultural. We still belief our culturals and value too. However, we want to be flexible to other people around us . . .
>
> However, we still teach our children about our cultural background, and language. They are learning both English and our native (Mien) language at the same time.

Ironically, this man's household experience illustrates the arbitrary nature of the chief distinction we have used to structure this chapter, namely the binary separation of welfare and work. Such a distinction is only meaningful in individual cases. The individuals we have interviewed live in households, and the social relations in these households often connect Mien who work with other extended family household members who may be receiving income support. The combination of resources obtained by work and welfare, in fact, has enabled many Mien families to remain viable. This finding sharply contrasts with the stereotype that welfare support is inherently destructive of family stability. As our electronics assembler shows in the following statement, welfare can be a means for preserving, rather that destroying, intergenerational ties.

> My children are in school. They go to school by bus everyday. They stay with my parents after school until we get home from work. My parents live very close to my house. They both on SSI, so they don't have anything to do but help us watch our children.

LEARNING FROM "DIFFERENCE": EFFECTIVE STATE POLICIES FOR MIEN REFUGEES

The Mien resettlement experience presents one of the most vivid examples of the issues with which those who set and implement state policy need to grapple in order to create effective and culturally appropriate social programs. Our initial finding that over two-thirds of the Mien respondents were unemployed directed us to examine closely the differences between those who remain dependent and those who have achieved self-sufficiency. Our research revealed important differences between nonworking and working Mien with regard to social backgrounds, transferability of "social capital" and skills, education, and experience with dislocation, which in turn affected their experiences in dealing with public and private mediating agencies assisting their resettlement in the U.S. A closer examination of the differences existing *within* the unemployed and employed groups in our sample moved us beyond the binary distinction between work and welfare to examine the combination of factors within each group, including work and use of social assistance, that has helped prolong the dependency of the unemployed and moved others toward self-sufficiency.

The initial differences in social backgrounds that we discovered between those who are working and those who are not, with the employed being more urbanized, educated, and having occupational experience that gave them transferable "social capital," provided the working Mien with important advantages in effectively using public and private assistance to integrate into American society. But social background differences, although crucial, are only the first part of the story that we unraveled in the Mien resettlement. As refugees sanctioned by the U.S. government, all of our respondents were entitled to social assistance programs, such as ESL classes and job training, through GAIN. All of the employed respondents enrolled in ESL classes and tended to have youth on their side in learning English, in which they were fluent. The majority of the unemployed respondents in their 30s and 40s also were taking advantage of or had previously enrolled in ESL training, yet none of them could speak English. More significant than age or personal ability for learning English was the finding that the employed respondents had the good fortune of enrolling in ESL classes with bilingual instructors or aides who spoke Mien or Laotian, while, remarkably, not one of the unemployed respondents had a bilingual instructor in either language.

Equipped with this basic survival and integration skill, our employed respondents were able to make effective use of additional assistance programs, including welfare, which helped them move toward employment and self-sufficiency. Our unemployed respondents, however, who had few transferable skills and little formal education, were further handicapped by ineffective language training in the U.S. They were thus doubly disadvantaged, making it more difficult for them to effectively utilize the next level of assistance, such as job training programs, to achieve self-sufficiency.

Effective English language training is a crucial intervening variable, helping to compensate for social background characteristics and experiences, and providing newcomers with the skills for initial adjustment and job training. Given its importance, effective language training for new immigrants cannot be left to chance or "good fortune." State

agencies need to contract with and more closely supervise ESL and bilingual education providers to make sure they have adequate numbers of competent bilingual instructors in the languages of their clientele. Private providers who can maintain competitive levels of competent instructors should not be excluded from contracting, but the state should carefully monitor teacher qualifications and experience to insure quality instruction. For example, some mutual assistance associations may be able to provide effective English language training because of their familiarity with the students' culture as well as language, and should be used to provide such services.

Social assistance programs are most effective when they are piggybacked with and linked to other programs, providing additional skills to help newcomers achieve self-sufficiency. As shown, the GAIN program was very effective not only in providing employable skills to our working respondents, but in placing them in English language-acquisition programs while they were collecting welfare. This initial linkage between welfare assistance and ESL classes facilitated respondents' entry into GAIN's job training programs and eventual employment, reducing the need for or temptation of prolonged dependency. The employed Mien we sampled needed only the initial job referral provided by GAIN after completing job training, and were able to move toward self-sufficiency through their successful job performance. This linkage from training to initial job placement obviously works, is effective, and is the crucial mechanism through which the multifaceted GAIN program enables its clients to achieve autonomy. As a public program success story, it should be maintained and reinforced by adequate funding.

Although none of our unemployed respondents spoke English, not all of them lacked work experience. Four had worked in jobs that did not require English, but they were low-skilled, low-paying jobs that didn't provide benefits. Given the tension in the U.S. between work and welfare benefits, when faced with a choice between working at a job that was barely sufficient to support their families and lacked medical coverage, or collecting welfare and obtaining health benefits, these respondents chose to collect or remain on welfare to provide medical coverage for their young families. Having to choose health coverage over work has prolonged the dependency of our unemployed respondents, postponing their acquisition of the skills needed to become self-sufficient.

This contradictory choice, recognized by both positive and negative critics of the American welfare system, no longer faces only newcomers in the U.S. As a result of the restructuring of the global economy during the last 25 years, the largest proliferation of new jobs in the U.S. has been in the secondary labor market. These are low-skilled and low-paid jobs lacking benefits. Increasingly, more and more Americans are also finding themselves in the position of having a low-wage job without medical coverage.

Given the new structural conditions of the labor market, the uncoupling of medical benefits from welfare assistance is now needed to extend health coverage to the working population. If new immigrants and native-born citizens alike could receive essential medical coverage without being on welfare, beneficiaries would no longer be placed in the position of choosing between work and health. At the same time, the provision and delivery of health services will have to be reorganized to control costs. Jobs with medical benefits will not only encourage and make it possible for people to work, but in the long run will reduce costs by facilitating the most effective and economical use of essential welfare benefits

when they are needed: to provide for and assist individuals as they obtain the skills needed for self-sufficiency and advancement. Effective social policy of this sort will benefit not only new immigrants, but all of us.

Chapter 6

THE NEW CHINESE IMMIGRATION: A WASTED BRAIN DRAIN?

After changes in U.S. immigration laws in the mid-1960s, which encouraged family reunification and established preferred occupational categories, Sacramento's Southside neighborhood became a point of entry for new immigrant Chinese from Hong Kong. Sponsored by family members and relatives who were longstanding residents in the area, new Hong Kong immigrants found that Southside provided them with affordable housing, ethnic markets, and established networks of social support. Living in Southside provided easy access to the informal network of relatives and their friends who spoke the new immigrants' language, and provided informal assistance and psychological support in adjusting to a new country.

In the late 1970s, increasing numbers of Hong Kong Chinese began to leave Southside, moving to the more affluent neighborhoods of East City and South Sacramento. Those who came with substantial savings in the 1970s settled directly in those areas in South Sacramento. Still another wave of new immigrants, coming directly from mainland China, began arriving in Sacramento in the 1980s, following improved diplomatic relations between the People's Republic of China and the United States. The Southside became the principal point of entry for mainland Chinese immigrants who came with little or no capital.

The family reunification policy is a prominent structural factor in Chinese migration, as it allowed the recreation of social networks among Chinese immigrants. Its significance cannot be overemphasized in understanding the process that brings new Chinese immigrants to Sacramento and other destinations throughout the United States. The irony that instituted family reunification as a principle in U.S. immigration law has been well expressed in the popular press:

> During the 1964 hearings on the liberalization of U.S. immigration laws, Attorney General Robert Kennedy testified that Asian immigration would virtually disappear. . . . The irony is that the 1965 law that made possible the current surge of [Asian] immigrations was supposed to boost the number of immigrants from "traditional" European nations. . . . What the lawmakers did not count on was that family reunification went directly to the heart of the Asian value system. . . . Because of the old law, Europeans in the U.S. were a generation or two away from immediate relatives and they really did not have many people to bring over anymore. . . . Once Asians got their foot in the door, they took full advantage of family reunification. (*San Francisco Chronicle*, 1988)

As we shall see, the interplay between this policy and extended family relations in the Asian value system is a major factor in the scale and settlement patterns of immigrant Chinese and other Asians in Sacramento and throughout the country.

NATIONAL ORIGINS OF THE CHINESE IMMIGRANTS

The Chinese men and women we interviewed had immigrated to the U.S. from 1985 onward, with the majority arriving since 1988. To investigate the settlement experiences of people comprising the most recent and least-known wave of Chinese migration, the majority of the respondents we interviewed, 65 percent, were from the People's Republic of China. For comparison, our remaining interviews were with new immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan, who arrived during the same period. These ethnographies would allow us to explore regional differences in social backgrounds and other resources, as well as political differences in sending societies, to understand how they affected the immigrants' settlement and adjustment process in Sacramento.

Perhaps our most striking initial finding was the relatively high level of educational and occupational attainment of our respondents, particularly those from the People's Republic of China (PRC). Overall, 55 percent of our respondents held bachelor's degrees, and the rest completed high school. Three-quarters of the males held university degrees, and over 40 percent of the females were college-educated. An interesting difference emerged when examining our respondents' national origins and educational attainment. Of those holding university degrees, all but one male (from Hong Kong) was from the PRC, and every female respondent with a university degree was from the PRC. One Taiwanese woman had several years of college training.

The mainland Chinese respondents' relatively high level of educational attainment supports the general finding in the migration literature concerning the earliest waves of migration from a sending region: initial migrants are usually those with some available resources, especially in relation to their fellow nationals, including information about the opportunities and lifestyles in the receiving country, which enables them to undertake the journey in the first place (Portes and Rumbaut, 1990). In addition, the relatively high educational level of women from the PRC can be viewed in the context of Communist China's emphasis on providing educational opportunity for women.

The occupational backgrounds of respondents from mainland China were related to educational attainment: the majority were from professional and highly technically skilled backgrounds. Their occupations included university professors in the fields of engineering, computer science, and English, army and factory engineers, a physician, an administrative manager, high school teachers, and a symphony violinist. The occupations of mainland respondents who had completed high school included a factory operator and a bank clerk. The occupational backgrounds of respondents from Hong Kong and Taiwan, the majority of whom had completed high school, tended to be in skilled factory and service work. Their prior occupations included an electronics factory manager, a textile chemist, a milk farm inspector, an elementary school teacher, a secretary, and a factory seamstress.

Thus, the new Chinese immigrants in our study generally were a group of urbanized, relatively highly educated people with previous employment skills that potentially could be transferred to the U.S. At the same time, the types of skills and resources they had varied by country of origin. Understandably, the primary resources brought by mainland Chinese were educational, professional, and technical skills, rather than monetary. As one respondent from the PRC told us, mainland Chinese come to the U.S. with only their plane ticket. Respondents from Hong Kong and Taiwan, although less highly educated and professionally skilled, brought manufacturing and service skills from their prior occupations. Some, in addition, brought capital in the form of personal savings, retirement funds, or money from the sale of their homes, which they tended to use to purchase homes or cars during their initial settlement in the U.S. As we shall see, however, the social backgrounds, skills, and resources of all of the new Chinese immigrants we interviewed stand in marked contrast to the conditions they face and the jobs available to them in Sacramento.

Questions about our respondents' decision to migrate yielded both reasons held in common and those related to country of origin. Family reunification was the most frequently cited common reason for migrating, which was not surprising given the 1965 immigration law designating reunification as a preference category. In particular, respondents from the mainland were taking advantage of China's recent opening to the West by reuniting with extended family members, some of whom had come here 50 years earlier, before China closed its doors.

The second reason respondents mentioned most frequently was their children's education. Mainland Chinese, Hong Kong, and Taiwanese immigrants all cited the intense pressure of college entrance exams on their children in competing for a limited number of placements. The third most frequently cited reason for migrating, related to educational opportunities, was a variant of "increased opportunities in the U.S.," "a better life," and "a higher standard of living for themselves and their children."

Other responses to questions about reasons for migrating related to the immigrants' country of origin. Over half of the Hong Kong respondents cited their concern about the future stability of life after Hong Kong's return to China in 1997 and subsequent loss of status as a British colony. Several respondents expressed concern for relatives remaining in Hong Kong, and hope eventually to sponsor their migration to the U.S. One Hong Kong respondent, for example, a 33-year-old electronics plant manager, reported that she had not intended to leave Hong Kong, but the Tienanmen Square incident in mainland China forced her change of mind and rapid departure:

> Why did we leave Hong Kong? Tell you the truth, we did not want to leave Hong Kong. Even after it was announced that in 1997 Hong Kong will be returned to China. We still believed the Chinese government's promise of not changing the system of Hong Kong for at least 50 years after 1997. But the June 4th Tienanmen Square Incident had changed our mind completely. We can't believe the stability of Hong Kong will be maintained. And our immigration paper processing went extremely smoothly. We were interviewed by the consulate in April and we were approved to enter the U.S. in September. We left in a hurry.

Although they were in the minority, approximately one-third of the respondents from China specifically referred to the role of political events in their lives and how these

affected their decision to migrate. Their references to politics were put forth in a matter-of-fact and balanced manner. A number of respondents, while fondly describing their happiness with their families and work in China, also disclosed that they experienced bitterness and deep psychological wounds during the 1966-76 Cultural Revolution. Several other respondents volunteered that although they were considered intellectuals and subject to "reeducation," they avoided harsh treatment because of their positions in the army or government. One respondent, a concert violinist, reported that except for a short period of time spent in a rural reeducation camp, he continued to perform with the Central Philharmonic Symphony, which maintained its regular performance schedule because of Communist Party Chairman Mao's wife's sponsorship of the orchestra as a "model revolutionary organization." Another respondent, an engineer in a machine tool factory, demonstrated the often-inextricable link between political and economic events in describing her situation immediately prior to migrating to the U.S. As a result of the economic sanctions placed on China after the events of Tienanmen Square, factory sales decreased and she and her coworkers experienced a sharp reduction in salary. Thus, even the most traditional "pull factors" of migration, such as family reunification and economic betterment, cannot be separated from a political context.

WORK AND SOCIAL SERVICE USE IN SACRAMENTO

Lacking the resettlement programs and social services to which refugees are legally entitled, new Chinese immigrants arriving in Sacramento relied heavily on their immediate families as well as long-settled, extended family members for initial lodging and information about day-to-day living. Hong Kong and Taiwanese immigrants relied, as well, on the savings they accumulated from house sales or previous employment in their homeland. To find employment, new Chinese immigrants relied on other new immigrants and on informal networks among established Chinese residents, particularly entrepreneurs from Hong Kong who comprised an employment enclave. Although the ethnic employment enclave is crucial for initial survival, it is also fraught with limitations and barriers to social and economic integration, of which many of our respondents were aware.

As noted earlier, the high level of unemployment and underemployment among our Chinese respondents was striking given their educational levels and occupational skills. Eighty percent were unemployed at the time of our interviews. Because half of these respondents had been employed recently, however, we were able to examine the types of jobs new Chinese immigrants initially obtained in Sacramento.

Except for a minority of respondents who had found jobs as teachers of bilingual language classes, a job training class in computers, and as an interviewer on a temporary community health project, the majority of both male and female respondents held jobs in small businesses in the ethnic enclave. These included working as waiters, dishwashers, busboys, and janitors in Chinese restaurants, groceries, and garment shops. Outside of the enclave, several male and female respondents found seasonal employment in fruit canneries and seafood processing plants. Several women also found employment as babysitters,

housecleaners, motel maids, and caretakers for the elderly. One woman had been an office clerk in New York City and one man had been a plumber in San Francisco.

The jobs our respondents obtained in both the enclave and mainstream economies were primarily low-skilled, low-paying jobs with little or no security, no medical benefits, and few possibilities for advancement. The majority of our respondents, particularly in enclave jobs, earned the minimum wage of $4.25 per hour; those with sweatshop employment in garment factories often earned less. Moreover, jobs in the enclave usually required long hours. Respondents often worked 10-hour days for six or seven days a week in restaurants and markets. One respondent, Tony, a 30-year-old former high school teacher with a bachelor's degree in physics, who lived with his parents and sister in a downtown Sacramento apartment, described the jobs he held since arriving in 1988:

> My first job here in the U.S. was doing miscellaneous work in a Chinese restaurant. I worked 10 hours a day earning about $900 dollars a month there (a check of $700 and $200 in cash). And that was a hard and long hour job. That was the reason I looked for another job. I found my current job in a [Chinese] restaurant as a busboy. I work about six hours a day. My current monthly income is about $800 dollars which includes the tips I receive. I have been earning the minimum wages since the beginning of my first job at the rate of $4.25 an hour. I have to support my father and mother who are at home without jobs.

Another respondent provided an even more striking example of the underutilization of his skills since arriving in Sacramento in 1988. Wong, at 53, had been a civil engineer in the Chinese armed forces and then moved to Hong Kong, where he built skyscrapers and underground tunnels. In describing his search for jobs in Sacramento, Wong illustrated his difficulty in adjusting to the conditions and arbitrary nature of small-business employment in contrast to his experience with the fixed rules and standards of large-scale bureaucracies:

> During these two years after I came to America, I did all different kinds of hard jobs. I worked for restaurants, as a janitor, and most recently in the seafood processing plant. I changed my job because I moved from one place to another in Sacramento. The other important reason was that I did not like working for a individual boss or owner because I had to pay attention to his mood. I am more used to working for the government, in a factory, or for an organization. My income was $1,200 a month at most.

In addition to low pay, hard work, and long hours, the vagaries of small-business employment included the temporary nature of the jobs our respondents held, which were subject to swings in the local, national, and international economy and labor markets. Seasonal and short-term jobs, which often end without notice, afford new immigrants little ability to plan for even the immediate future, as illustrated by the experiences of these respondents, the first a 54-year-old chemist, and the second a 33-year-old electronics worker:

> After I came to Sacramento I had only worked for a short while in a grocery store in Elk Grove. I worked there as a miscellaneous worker for about a month and a half. Later I knew why I was hired by the owner. The store serves many season workers who came to pick fruits. When the season comes it has many

customers. The owner needed someone to help in the store. The owner is a Chinese. When he hire me, he did not tell me how long I was going to be there. When the season ended most of the workers left. I was laid off by the owner of the store.

My first job after we moved to Sacramento was a sewing job in a clothes factory run by a Chinese. I work eight hours a day at a rate of $4.25 an hour. I work there for five weeks before the factory was closed down because of financial problem. I only got two weeks' pay. I have to wait until they open a fruit processing plant in the coming season to get my pay-check for the other three weeks.

Now I am working for another fruit processing plant on 12th Street. I work seven hours a day. After my English class in the Center, I will go to work. I have worked there for three weeks. That was only a seasonal job. Last week I worked only for a day. The season will end soon. I will be out of job again. The work there is to pick up rotten or unripe fruits such as tomatoes and peaches from the conveyer belt. Workers who had work for the factory for over 90 days are entitled to unemployment aid. I am not qualified for that.

A number of respondents, in discussing their working conditions, described the discriminatory and exploitative practices they were subject to, particularly in enclave jobs. One respondent, in discussing her job as a seamstress in a garment factory in San Francisco, described a fairly common practice among sweatshop owners: although she was earning only $10 a day at the factory, her employer reported to the government that he was paying his workers what was then the minimum wage of $3.35 per hour. Another respondent who had worked in a Chinese restaurant described how he was expected to work overtime without remuneration, a common practice among enclave employers that was corroborated by a local press investigation on sweatshop employment:

I worked full-time in a Chinese restaurant helping the chef and got paid $4.25 an hour. My friend had to drop me off at the restaurant on his way to work and pick me up on his way home everyday since I did not have a car. I had to work over time now and then without being paid for. Chinese bosses always ask their Chinese employees to work over time for nothing. This is a painful fact. I am not the only one being treated like this. In spite of this I got along all right with my boss and my fellows. (*Sacramento Bee*, 1985: 1)

In discussing the conditions of the enclave economy another respondent, a physician who arrived recently from the People's Republic, displayed a sophisticated understanding of the economic relations in her new country. Framing the exploitative practices of the enclave in structural terms, she related these practices to the competitive pressures on small-business owners to reduce labor costs through the use of the new international labor force:

When a Chinese boss (in a restaurant and garment business) has to hire people, he is trying to hire the cheapest people who will work the hardest. His main objective is to make a profit. White people won't come work for a Chinese boss because he won't give you any kind of benefit and the pay is low. And the Chinese boss can't afford to hire these kind of people anyway. So a Chinese boss

anyways end up hiring Chinese. He is hard on his workers because he can afford to. With so many immigrants around, he can pay low. If you won't work for $1,000 a month, he can go hire someone else for $900 a month. The new immigrants have to take these jobs, we don't have cars to go elsewhere to look and we don't know the surroundings. So I can't choose what I want to do, I have to take any job I can get. If you worked at a place for 5–6 years and got some savings and you leave, someone will just come in and take your job. There never will be shortages for these jobs because there always [will be] new immigrants coming in.

Well-aware of the exploitative and discriminatory practices they experienced in enclave jobs, our respondents were also aware of the barriers they faced in obtaining mainstream employment. The primary obstacle they saw was their lack of English language skills, severely limiting them to jobs in the enclave, with their accompanying practices, described in this way by one respondent:

> The restaurant where I work is owned by a Chinese. The manager and the cooks are all Chinese. Other employees of the restaurant are mostly Chinese except the hostesses and some of the waitresses. In my work place the manager discriminatingly mistreats his fellow Chinese employees. If a Chinese employee makes a mistake, he or she will be strongly criticized by or threatened by the manager. If one of the white American hostess or waitress makes a mistake, then everything will still be okay. I feel that Chinese employers treat Chinese workers very badly. If it was not the problem of language, many of us would find a job in the business run by Americans. On the whole I find it very hard to find jobs in this area. In some place, the union regulations exclude us for a job opportunity.

Our respondents were also at a disadvantage as new immigrants because of their lack of knowledge about government regulatory standards and protective labor legislation — a situation compounded by two structural factors: the lack of union organizing and protection, as well as the difficulty of enforcing labor standards in the very types of small businesses in which new immigrants were employed, as astutely recognized by this respondent:

> When I worked for the grocery store I had to move 1,000 boxes of beer and other bottle everyday. That kind of physical work was not for people of my age. But I had to take it. My age gave the boss reasons to lay me off. There are a lot of tricky things about salary negotiation. I was not clear about that. You can be asked to work seven days a week or 10 hours a day while you are getting a fixed wages of certain dollars a day or a week. And you can't get any overtime pay. New immigrants don't understand labor law, unions and government regulations. They are often the victims of those mean bosses. In big companies there might be unions like in the auto industry. There is no union in small business.

Although ethnic employment enclaves provide a crucial means for initial survival, as well as cultural familiarity and continuity during the early and most difficult stages of adjustment, they are also fraught with risks for new immigrants. In addition to the exploitative practices our respondents were subject to, the very strengths of the enclave — survival and cultural familiarity — are also part of its limitations. Although working with

other Chinese-speaking individuals provides cultural familiarity, it affords little opportunity to learn and practice English, the major barrier in obtaining better jobs in the mainstream economy, as explained by this respondent:

> Another bad thing about working for Chinese is that you will be speaking and hearing Chinese all the time. You can't learn any English which allows you to go someplace else to look for a job. So what if you have made some savings working at a place for 5–6 years, you still stuck with that job and you can't get a better job because your English haven't gotten any better. So I rather go work for a white boss at a white establishment. I may not speak and hear English well now, but I'm sure I can pick it up quickly if I am in the right environment. I can read and write right now, only I get nervous and mixed up if someone speaks too fast or if I am trying to say something in English. So I hoping to find one of those jobs later but since I need money now, I take anything.

Being confined to an enclave with little or no English language skills also limits new immigrants to the informal networks comprised primarily of other new immigrants. This restricts their opportunity to make crucial contact with other networks to help them break into the mainstream economy, and thus prolongs their marginalization. Marginalization within the enclave is compounded for highly skilled immigrants because of the nontransferability of their professional licenses and non-negotiability of their skills, leading to high levels of underemployment. This was summed up by one respondent, who exhorts new immigrants to move beyond the enclave:

> In order to adapt to the American society you should be able to speak the language. If you can't speak the language you cannot make friends with the people around you. Living within the circle of Chinese is too limited. You cannot find good jobs within the Chinese circle. There are a number of reasons for why it is so difficult for us Chinese to find a job. The first reason is language problem. I can't say that the employers discriminate against immigrants. Can you imagine if you want to hire a person who cannot speak and does not understand what you say? The second reason is the licensing regulation. I have a license for construction projects which I attained in Hong Kong. But it is not accepted here in the U.S. So my previous experience does not work toward my advantage. I am only qualified for interior decoration and repair works. Many of the construction companies I contacted here in Sacramento only believed in persons recommended by other companies or institutions. They don't even consider an individual applicant. The third reason is that we don't have many friends. We do not have many friends because I can't speak the language. Without friends we feel isolated and helpless. The Chinese here concentrate in some of the small business such as restaurants and stores. I cannot depend on them. There indeed some Chinese associations here but they can hardly help with those specific problems many new immigrants have. So I am not interested in them. In Sacramento there is no Chinese newspaper and no advertisements of jobs vacancies. You need someone to introduce you. Now I am hoping the Chinese Community Service Center can help me get a job. In the next three years I am not thinking of moving. However,

my friends told me that after five years of my stay in the United States and received my citizenship, I can go to Canada. Because they recognize the British license I had. I can work as an engineer.

The difficulties new Chinese immigrants experienced during their initial adjustment process because of unemployment, underemployment, or problematic working conditions were heightened by their lack of awareness of public social services. Except for ESL classes, the majority of our respondents had not used any government services to assist them in settling or to supplement their sporadic work. The most frequently used services of those who sought assistance were unemployment insurance, which two respondents collected, and Medi-Cal, which another two collected. One individual obtained Medi-Cal for her sons.

Thus, the majority of our respondents lacked any form of health insurance, except for one individual who had purchased private insurance, another who had purchased insurance for her son, and one who was covered by his spouse's insurance policy. One respondent estimated that only 20 percent to 30 percent of new Chinese immigrants had any form of health coverage. Another newcomer put the situation more baldly:

> It cost too much here to go see a doctor, so you just have to rough it out. We don't have any kind of medical care. It's like everyone says, "Don't get sick in America, it better to die than to stay sick." Because if you see a doctor here, you'll be spending the rest of life paying it off. You have to come up with that big initial payment and then you'll still be paying every month for the rest of your life.

As legal immigrants, our respondents were entitled to government means-tested programs after meeting residency and eligibility requirements. The majority of our respondents, however, had little knowledge of or even awareness about these services, as typified by this respondent:

> If anybody told me about any kind of government help that I can get, I would go there to the agency to try to get some aid. I tried to get some aid for my mother but everyone told me there were none around here. They said they have some in San Francisco but not in Sacramento. That what immigrants [said] who have been here for a while. I feel that the government should help but for the three months we been here, there has been no help. If there was help, I don't knew about it. I wish that the government should just help out with the first two or three years when you get here because that is your hardest time.

Several factors contributed to the new Chinese immigrants' lack of awareness about available services. As our respondents were largely confined to the informal networks of the ethnic enclave economy, they interacted primarily with other new immigrants who were in roughly the same economic situation and had little access to information about available services, as reported by this respondent:

> The government doesn't help at all. . . . We have to depend on ourselves. If we fall down, we have to get up by ourselves. We don't know about any agencies or forms that we can fill out to get assistance. Our Chinese circle is very poor. They are all new immigrants too. Even those that's been here 6 or 7 years, they

don't know about it either. These Chinese are the only people we talk to anyway, so we don't learn anything from them. If you work in a Chinese restaurant, none of the workers know about any government help, so we can't tell each other something that none of us know about. Even if there is assistance, we don't hear about it.

Our respondents' language limitations restricted their access to information about government assistance, which was further limited by their scattered settlement in three different neighborhoods — Southside, East City and South Sacramento — and the lack of Chinese media in Sacramento. As one respondent admitted:

> We feel pretty isolated in this area [Southside]. The lack of information on social service programs and financial aids makes us often feel helpless. I think there might be a lot of information about those financial aids and social programs in English. But most of the immigrants do not understand the language well. I heard of some kind of social service programs from friends and relatives. But I am not sure about the detail and eligibilities. I have not received any of them. Also, it seems to me that Chinese are shy of begging for help. They would try to endure hardship rather than letting some body know that they are poor. I hope more information could be available in Chinese. Unlike New York and San Francisco, there is no Chinese newspapers in town. This makes us Chinese feel more isolated.

This depiction of the reticence among Chinese immigrants to seek assistance reveals an important historical dimension of Chinese immigration, settlement, and social service use in the U.S. In the past, Chinese immigrants generally refrained from using social programs because of their cultural disdain for what was considered "undignified welfare." Moreover, Chinese Americans generally avoided contact with government agencies because of the country's long history of discrimination against the Chinese, ranging from outright exclusion to preventing Chinese immigrants from becoming naturalized U.S. citizens. Because such laws were considered unfair, many early Chinese entered the country illegally with falsified papers, claiming to be other men's sons. Such "paper sons" taught their U.S.-born children to be cautious about contacts with government agencies, to protect their families from possible deportation. As a result, publicly funded social services historically have not been widely used by members of the Chinese American community.

Our respondents, in contrast, displayed no such reluctance to use social programs, but rather were quite interested in learning about their availability. One reason for this difference between earlier and recent Chinese immigrants appears to be the presence of community-based organizations since the late 1960s, accompanied by a rise in ethnic consciousness, which fostered changes in attitudes and facilitated use of social services. In addition, mainland immigrants appear to have more positive views toward such services because of their experience with a communist government in China, where social programs are widely accepted. Furthermore, as we shall see, coming to the U.S. and observing other newcomers (such as Southeast Asian refugees) using government assistance programs has given new Chinese immigrants a very different impression than earlier Chinese immigrants had of the appropriate role of government in the lives of Asian immigrants.

Thus, the Chinese immigrants we studied nearly universally requested information about available social services to assist them during their initial settlement. As a number of respondents pointed out, they need information not only about welfare, but about basic issues concerning citizenship. This included information on the structure of U.S. laws and the legal system, as well as on the rights and duties of new immigrants.

The urgent nature of this request became evident through our finding that, although a number of public/private-funded community-based organizations serving new Chinese immigrants existed in Sacramento, our respondents neither participated in, nor were even aware, of such organizations. These included two health clinics, a legal referral service, a translation and information outreach service, a senior citizens' nutrition program, and a mental health program. Several respondents expressed a desire for a central organization or department that could disseminate information about initial survival. As one respondent put it:

> About government's policy toward new immigrants, I would say that more information about how to settle down should be provided for them. Every new immigrant must go to the Immigration and Naturalization Service. They can give them information right there. When I came, no one tell me anything. I found out by myself about such things as when you are in emergency, you should call 911. I wish someone could have told me when we arrived. Information brochures can be given out to new immigrants when they visit the consulate in foreign countries before they enter. New immigrants need information about their rights, their duties and other necessary information for how to settle down.

The one service our respondents knew about and participated in was the community-based Sacramento Chinese Community Service Center (SCCSC), located in Southside. Its goal is to assist recently arrived Asian immigrants during the initial adjustment process in overcoming cultural and/or language barriers, and offers bilingual translation and interpretation services, an intensive English-language survival skills class and a job training program, in addition to classes ranging from painting to computers. The SCCSC receives public and private funding, currently through the United Way, the federally sponsored Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA), which is administered locally through the Sacramento Employment Training Agency, and private donations. Because its federal funding through JTPA is not specifically earmarked to assist refugees, the SCCSC primarily serves a Chinese immigrant clientele, providing a comfortable, culturally familiar atmosphere.

The most important service the SCCSC provides, according to our respondents, is the job training skills program and subsequent assistance in connecting the newcomer with a place of employment. According to the SCCSC director, the goal of the JTPA is to try to locate private-sector employment for new immigrants in the mainstream economy, and encourage them to avoid working in small, family-owned businesses in the enclave. Thus, after new immigrants complete two months of on-site work training, usually in public agencies, the center tries to place them in private-sector employment to increase their exposure to the English language and facilitate their integration into mainstream society. Although this is the center's priority, it cannot always find such employment for its clients.

Our respondents learned about the center primarily through relatives or friends. Because it is located in the Southside, a Chinese neighborhood, several respondents

"discovered" the center by noticing a leaflet in their neighborhood or by simply walking past it. At the time of the interviews, our respondents were participating in the four-week intensive language training class, where they had access to a bilingual Chinese instructor.

After completing their English class, our respondents would begin job training classes. As they reported, this was the essential reason they were participating in the center, which was the only organization in which the majority were involved. Our respondents tended to view the center and how best to use its services according to their needs and backgrounds. Given their technically skilled backgrounds, a number of individuals were specifically interested in the computer courses the center offered to upgrade or reconvert their skills. For someone as specialized as our concert violinist, the center represented a place to obtain job leads or contacts with individuals who could help him obtain relevant employment. As he described:

> I am attending this English class hoping I can be introduced to people or to a job. They help me put out an advertisement of offering private tutoring of violin at a fee of $20 an hour. I hope this will work.

Similarly, other respondents viewed the center's language class as a means to an end in obtaining employment, and in making the right contacts with other students who could assist them in their job search, as typified by the comment below:

> I found this community center because I was looking around for a job in downtown and I just passed by it. It hard reading English but they had Chinese posting up on the door, so I just hurried up and ask them about it. Everyday I'm walking around downtown looking for a job. I can't look anyplace else. If it's far, I don't have a car to go there. I think going to the center help me with listening and speaking in English. My biggest hope is that the center will help me get a job in the end. That is more important than learning English. There are already people hired with those cards that are posted in the center. In Sacramento, you [need] someone to introduce you to get a job. If you don't have that connection, it is very difficult. I hoping the people that are in the class with me can introduce me to a job. If the center can't help me, I hoping the people in the class will help me. I will help them if I can and I hope they will help me too. When the class stops, the center will have a work-study and that's when they will try to get you a job . . . I am not exactly sure how they will help, I'll see when the class is over. When the class is over, I would probably keep in touch with some of the people.

Thus, for new Chinese immigrants the SCCSC represents the best and, except for one other local public-private community organization serving new Chinese immigrants, currently the only hope many immigrants have to locate mainstream employment. Although it offers such invaluable services as English language and job training classes, the center provides a crucial link through placing newcomers in jobs, especially outside the ethnic enclave, which activates other survival skills to facilitate self-sufficiency. Because of this, the center has the potential to achieve for Chinese immigrants what the GAIN program successfully accomplished for the employed Mien in our study: by effectively linking government assistance, ESL and job training to job placement, many immigrants were able to become self-sufficient. Unlike our Mien respondents, however, who have traveled the

farthest with regard to social backgrounds, the Chinese immigrants we studied already had skills from which to build to accelerate their retraining and eventual mainstream employment. Financially strapped community-based organizations need increased funding to further develop these services and improve their outreach, so new immigrants can be directed early on to these programs. The value of the center's programs, when so few resources are available to new Chinese immigrants, did not go unrecognized by its clientele, as the following respondents testified:

> This Chinese Community Service Center will introduce some job opportunities to us after the training period. I wish the government could build a place or department to give Chinese people all the necessary information for them to live on their own. I am not asking for money. All I want is a job. But I don't know where I should go for help. The center is helpful. We need a lot more services like this.

> I hope community service centers such as this should be in reality as well as in name. This center has just been reorganized. And it is much better now. We can really get some training. The one-month of intensive language training is very helpful. Through this training we Chinese really begin to learn the basic surviving skill. Centers as such these are indispensable to new immigrants. The two-month practical training will help them enter the society.

Despite our respondents' usually sketchy knowledge of services available to new immigrants, they were aware that other newcomers were entitled to and received government assistance. In fact, the lack of government services available to assist them during the most difficult stage of initial settlement led a number of respondents to compare their situation to what they perceived to be the situation of "others," in this case Vietnamese refugees. On the one hand, this awareness was expressed by some individuals in a direct, matter-of-fact fashion, typified by the following remark, "the government doesn't help us at all. I'm not Vietnamese, if I was that would be a different story." For other respondents, however, the awareness of difference led to a questioning of U.S. government policies, which they viewed as unfairly distinguishing between new immigrants by providing automatic assistance programs for some groups and not others, when all were in apparent need of support, as expressed below:

> I heard that the U.S. government had some special financial aids programs for Vietnamese immigrants. I feel that the Chinese immigrants are being treated unfairly. Why do they get those kinds of assistance which we can't get? It seems that the competition between different groups of immigrants are not equal because someone is being helped by the government while others are not. I also heard that the government is going to cut educational funding. If that funding is cut, the teaching of English in adult school will be affected. Benefits that immigrants can get from that will be reduced.

A number of our Chinese respondents, without understanding the complex legal criteria and/or political nature of U.S. immigration policy in determining refugee versus immigrant status, but relying on their own lack of support while observing other new immigrants getting assistance, expressed resentment toward refugees. This was fueled by their limited

contact with refugees and consequent reliance on hearsay about the types and amount of benefits available to them. Most significantly, some felt they were being unfairly pitted against others in a competition over scarce resources, as one respondent described:

> We need information about government's welfare programs. For example, we don't know about food stamp. When we saw the refugee people using them in the market and we asked about it. But we still don't know who can receive it and how. We heard about the AFDC which provides each child in the family with $800 a month till he/she is 18. Those families can also receive food stamps and low-income housing. It seems to me that the refugees are getting too much welfare while we don't get any. . . . Many of those refugees would work for cash for a cheaper price. It makes it harder for us to find a job. Many of those refugees become better off by receiving welfare. I think that is not good for their younger generation. Life is too easy [for] them. The government is taking the responsibility to raise them until they graduate from college. I know some refugees in L.A. They signed up for training classes and technical schools. But they only attended classes several times a month. Their purpose was to go and receive welfare. People from Taiwan and Hong Kong may be better off. But people from mainland Chine face a tough situation. They don't have savings. The refugees are a bigger challenge to them.

Other Chinese immigrants not only questioned U.S. welfare policies but called for closer monitoring of the system's eligibility criteria, as one respondent propounded:

> I think the welfare programs for the Vietnamese immigrants are too much. . . . They are getting too much while other[s] . . . can't even get any. I am not suggesting that we should abolish their program. I am only suggesting that the government should do some research on how their money is spent and the changes of their conditions and to make sure if they are still qualified occasionally. There are a lot of other immigrants need help. I think some of the welfare legislation are out of date. They should be renewed regularly.

In addition to making interethnic comparisons regarding the availability of government assistance, our respondents also made distinctions among themselves regarding resettlement resources available. Both mainland Chinese and Hong Kong immigrants, for example, were aware of the differences in the amount of capital they brought from their homelands. The mainland Chinese felt particularly disadvantaged financially in comparison to Hong Kong and Taiwanese immigrants, who arrived with savings that enabled them to purchase cars and/or homes, important assets for initial settlement.

Although all of our respondents faced a difficult settlement process, the mainland Chinese experienced the greatest degree of culture shock in the U.S. Coming from a communist country that was also less industrialized than either Hong Kong or Taiwan, they faced a completely new political and economic system, with a different range of cultural practices. At a basic level, mainland Chinese faced survival in their new country without, as they put it, an "iron rice bowl" — that is, the near-universal guarantee of lifetime employment found in China, through which their subsistence needs were provided.

In addition to coping with rigorous demands for survival in their new country, the mainland Chinese generally lacked the social networks available to Hong Kong and Taiwanese immigrants. Although they certainly used the networks available in the ethnic enclave economy to obtain employment, other networks such as family clan associations, forged through years of immigration from Hong Kong and Taiwan, were less readily available to mainland immigrants. As one respondent observed about the conditions facing the mainland Chinese:

> [T]he people from Taiwan and Hong Kong have their own money. Their [country's] economy is a lot more advanced than China. We came over with empty hands. They come over here and right away they can buy a house and a car; we don't have a cent when we come over. They can also find jobs easier because they have connections here, they can borrow money too from their other friends. That's why there is so much pressure on a person [from China] right when they get here. The biggest difference between the people from Hong Kong and Taiwan and us is our financial situation. I think they are also better adapted to work here than us. They are more used to working conditions here than us because the work in China is slower and more relaxed. Another thing that's different between people from Hong Kong and Taiwan than people from China is that even though a lot of us are university graduates, they still speak English better than us. . . . So even though we are still all new immigrants, they are better off. But on the other hand, they earned those houses and cars back when they were working in Hong Kong and Taiwan. In this class we don't have things like just Hong Kong people sticking together, the Taiwan people sticking together, and the China people sticking together, but in the larger society, that is true. If your name is Lee, then another Lee will help you, or if your name is Chan, than another Chan will help you. In the U.S., these kinds of things are popular, you know, like those [family clan] associations. It hard to break into these associations if you are from China.

CHANGING FAMILY RELATIONS

With so few social services available to and known about by Chinese immigrants, our respondents' immediate and extended families initially provided the means to survive as well as a center of solidarity and emotional support. They also helped maintain traditional values, particularly with regard to filial piety and respect, and the close supervision and education of children. Several of our respondents were eldest sons or wives of eldest sons, who in turn received and cared for their elderly parents. Thus their households became the center of the family, where members would meet for holiday gatherings and special occasions. Similarly, nearly all of our respondents expressed a concern for their children's education and successful futures, and remained actively involved in their children's school performance. Several parents proudly reported on their children's academic achievements, for example, while others described their close supervision of children's homework to counteract what they perceived as too much freedom in the U.S. education system.

Despite the support they received, new Chinese immigrant families are severely overburdened. Eighty percent of the Chinese we sampled were unemployed when interviewed, making daily economic survival a precarious and difficult affair. The majority of the married women were unemployed and relied on their spouses' employment, for example, yet, with the exception of one woman whose husband held an engineering position, their spouses held low-income jobs in the ethnic enclave. Two of the unemployed married women faced a particularly precarious situation, as their husbands were also unemployed. Similarly, the majority of the married men we interviewed were unemployed, and had unemployed spouses.

Of the two unmarried women we interviewed, one was temporarily employed in a fruit processing factory and contributing to the support of her brother's family, with whom she lived. The other lived with her three siblings and their mother, whose low-income job as a seamstress supported the family. The unmarried man in our study was unemployed and living with his parents, who were also unemployed. Finally, a married man who was trying to earn enough money to bring his spouse to the U.S. from mainland China was struggling in enclave employment to support his elderly parents, with whom he lived.

Extended family members were also relied on to provide initial support, primarily lodging, assistance in finding a house or apartment, information about local schools, and a general orientation to day-to-day living in Sacramento. These sponsors, who usually were siblings, brothers- or sisters-in-law, or parents, often provided financial assistance as well, ranging from minimal short-term to significant support. On the whole, however, assistance from extended family members who were long-settled in the U.S. took the form of information sharing rather than sustained financial support.

When we questioned new Chinese immigrants about the nature of their relations with extended family members, we received mixed responses. Although the majority described their relations as "normal," with approximately one-quarter describing them as extremely close, how much support they could expect or count on from their relatives varied substantially. The quarter who described these relations as extremely close depended on and received significant assistance from their extended families during their initial settlement. This included lodging for an extended period and financial assistance. For example, one respondent was provided with a house by her brother, a long-term settler, to care for their elderly parents. Another respondent, an eldest son, received sustained financial assistance from his long-settled sisters while their mother resided with him. Another respondent described the generous assistance her husband's aunt provided during her initial settlement, which appeared to emanate from her aunt's religious convictions as well as feelings of kinship:

> In December of 1989, I received two I-134 Forms [sponsorship] from my husband and his aunt. Finally, my son and I got our visiting visa and arrived at the International Airport in San Francisco. I planned to visit my aunt-in-law for a few days in San Jose and then go to Chicago to join my husband. But she was so insistent that we stay and told me that she would help me plan for my family's future since I was new here. She is doing computer business and earns a profit of much more than $100,000 per year. She offered her house to me and promised to take care of my son's education. So I decided to stay in her place and had my

husband visit me during his vacation. My aunt-in-law has two big houses next to each other. We lived together for a while and then separated for more convenience but we still have our meal together. She provided everything except extra cash for me. She dropped my son at school and took him back every day. . . . She is willing to help because she is a Christian. She wants to convert you until gradually you will believe what she believes.

Despite describing their relations with extended family members as normal, and sometimes close, more than half of the Chinese respondents felt they could not expect or count on financial support from their relatives, who were often struggling with their own survival and had limited resources. They felt, in addition, that American values of independence and self-reliance were influencing their relations with and expectations of extended family members, as described by this respondent:

> In America, your relatives and friends cannot help you much. They have their own problem of survival, unless they are "big bosses" themselves. You must depend on yourself, on your own strengths — physical and mental. American is society which emphasizes individualism. It is a competitive society. Only those who adapt to it will survive. You can blame no one. This is quite different from the Chinese society which emphasizes collectivism and where nepotism runs rampant.

As described by the above respondent, the differences between U.S. and Chinese values and practices present a particular challenge for mainlanders. New immigrants from Hong Kong and Taiwan, however, also felt that individualism was the key to survival in the U.S., as expressed by the following respondent. This woman, from Hong Kong, felt that her relations with extended family members remained emotionally close, but without significant expectations of assistance:

> In America, it seems to me that you must rely on yourself. Individualism is key word here. You should do it yourself. In Hong Kong, people tend to care more about the society and other people. We could expect helps from co-workers. But here you can't do that. The relationship between people is quite different. I began to get used to it.

Related to the conflict between American and Chinese values in shaping the adjustment process of new immigrants, a number of respondents also felt that the concerns and attitudes of their extended family members had changed through the settlement process, often making them less likely to identify with and assist family newcomers. As described this respondent:

> Our relatives here have lived in America for so many years that their ways of living, habits and attitudes towards people have changed greatly. We can't expect too much of their help. No one even helped us to look for a house. My wife and I went out on our own. We had no idea of what to look for, where to go and what the price was. And we were shocked to find the price of houses were rising thousands of dollars by hours. We were forced to make a hasty decision to buy the house we are living in now. I did not even know that we could rent

relatively cheap apartment in downtown. We did not have access to any kind of information about how to settle down.

The shift in values and concerns that many newcomers experienced in their settled family members was particularly relevant for respondents who had highly successful and prosperous relatives in the U.S. The successful relatives now had a very different social position, with its accompanying resources, interests, and cultural practices, reducing their ability to relate to the situation and needs of new immigrants. At the same time, the position of the newcomers often made it awkward for them to associate with or approach successful relatives, which increased their isolation from extended kin. As one respondent explained:

> I have lots of relative in America, in San Francisco, Napa, Los Angeles, and even Vancouver. But I don't see them or associate with them too much. That is because a lot of them have been over here for a long time. They are of a different class than us. They have businesses, and a lot of them are professionals like doctors and professors. It is hard associating with them because they are higher class while we are lower class. My uncle in San Francisco did help me in the beginning by giving me a job as a cashier in their grocery store but that was very hard work because I also did other stuff like carrying crates and moving other stuff around. I switched to being a waitress and that where I meet friends that I associated with and whom I still keep in contact with. They are of the same level with us and that why we can be friends. They help us find an apartment; we couldn't really ask our relatives to help us. It is too hard, they are of a different class than us and it harder to associate with them. I see and keep in touch with my friends a lot more than my relatives; I hardly ever talk with them.

A number of respondents felt that a highly significant factor influencing the shift in values and concerns of extended family members was their exposure to American materialism and its accompanying drive for individual success. In the case of the following respondent, the predominance of this value over the value of familial obligation caused an estrangement between her and her sisters:

> When I came to the United States, I first stayed in New York where I have two sisters. They run a coffee shop. At the beginning, they agreed that I joined them to run the business. But we could not get along soon after. We were very good sisters before they moved to America. I think when people stayed here for a long time, they have been changed. They have become more materialized. The feeling of caring between sisters has gone. They care only about money, not friendship.

Another respondent, in describing her relationship with her long-settled sister, summarized the conditions affecting familial relations between new immigrants and their kin. Acknowledging the reality of limited time and resources, on the one hand, and the different concerns of both groups, on the other, she stressed the need for self-reliance on the part of Chinese newcomers:

> In 1985, all of us came to America with my sister's sponsoring. She lives in Los Angeles. I have normal relationship with her. We do not visit each other that

much. A few phone calls on holidays are what we do. This may sound weird. But it is true with many Chinese families I know of. One of the reasons is all of us are busy enough to make our living. There is not really much spare time having vacations together. My sister did not support us financially when we came over to U.S. It is quite common among Chinese people. Nobody is rich anyway. But I do know that some people are rich yet they do not do much for their poor relatives. This may be attributed to "materialism" here, so to speak. It was already a big favor of her to sponsor our immigration to America. We surely appreciate that. We knew we have to help ourselves at each step of our life.

The challenges to survival facing new Chinese immigrants who have so few resources available to them are highlighted in the story of two of our subjects, Wong and Lin, a married couple. Their courage, initiative, and unrelenting effort have enabled them to surmount successfully the difficulties of survival in the U.S. by using their skills to become social service providers outside of the ethnic enclave. In this sense, they are atypical of the majority of our respondents. Yet, it is precisely their experience with and commitment to assisting other new immigrants through their own adjustment process that provides an invaluable example of possible and effective strategies for helping new Chinese immigrants achieve self-sufficiency.

IMMIGRANTS HELPING IMMIGRANTS: WONG AND LIN

The decision to migrate to the U.S. was not any easy one for Wong and Lin. Typical of our respondents from mainland China, both were highly educated and successful. Wong had reached the pinnacle of his career prior to their migration. Both had graduated from the most prestigious university in southern China and became university professors in Canton. Lin was a senior lecturer in English at a teacher's university, and Wong was a professor of computer science and a research associate at a microelectronics research institute. Both had more than 20 years' teaching experience before arriving in the U.S.

Prior to leaving China, Wong had also become the vice general manager of a joint venture between the institute and an American company to import and trade computer equipment. With China's opening to the West, many foreign companies over the past 10 years had arrived in Canton, historically the center of trade and business with the West and now considered to be the "window" for entering into business relations with China. Because of the institute's advantageous position in Canton, Wong had developed important contacts with a number of business people from overseas countries, including the U.S.

In addition to his professional achievements, Wong had the opportunity to travel in the U.S. before immigrating from China. From 1981 to 1983 he was a visiting scholar at the University of California, Berkeley. In 1985 the deputy governor of Guangdong province invited Wong to accompany him on a trip to Silicon Valley, to establish connections for high-technology trade with China. As Wong disclosed, the opportunity for and privilege of travel would have continued if he had remained in China.

Given the satisfying life they had achieved in China, the decision to migrate required a great deal of soul searching by Wong and Lin, which they frequently discussed with friends and colleagues. Similar to others we interviewed, the decision was finally based on their children's education and desire to reunite with Wong's family, all of whom resided in the U.S. As he described:

> My future looked very promising, [so] why should I leave? It was not an easy question to answer. Why did we decide to leave? The main reason was for the education of our children. My son and daughter were both at the points of transition. My son would face his college entrance examination. And my daughter would go to high school the following year. There was no guarantee that my son could be accepted by a university. . . . If he had failed, it would have been a burden on him and on us parents.

Reflecting on the decision to leave their homeland, Wong movingly disclosed that he and his family, like others, experienced both happiness and bitterness with their country. Despite his bitterness, he continued to reiterate his love for his homeland and his gratitude for his country's generosity in granting his departure. He thus regards himself as a patriot abroad, and desires to play a continuing role in China's development:

> Peoples like us are different from the second and the third generations of Chinese here in America. They might have forgotten their motherland. We are different from Chinese who came from Taiwan and Hong Kong. We have a special feeling for the country [China] which the people from the other parts do not have. Mainland China is going to the core of China no matter what kind of political system she will have in the future. In the mind of those leaders, letting us go might constitute a temporary loss to China. But in the long run it would help the country's modernization and the nation as a whole. We were deeply moved by that. We will always keep this in our minds.

Accompanied by their son and daughter, Wong and Lin arrived in the U.S. in 1986. The family came directly to Sacramento, where Wong's brothers, one of whom was his sponsor, and sisters reside. In addition, Wong had a job waiting for him, making him an exception to our other respondents. Because of his contacts with American business people in China, two American companies offered him a position in the U.S. upon learning of his decision to migrate. Wong accepted a position with a systems engineering company in Sacramento. His future supervisor, who happened to be Chinese, greeted the family at the airport, arranged for their initial housing, and obtained a new apartment for them in Sacramento.

Although Wong regarded himself as extremely lucky to obtain a professional position upon his arrival, he soon had his first experience with workplace discrimination in white-collar, primary-sector employment. Despite having been hired as a supervisor performing both hardware and software tasks, Wong discovered that his salary was half of what systems engineers in the area earned on average. He attributed this salary discrimination to his vulnerable position as a new immigrant:

> It was obvious that the company hired me to lower their operating cost. I was hired as a supervisor. I did both hardware and software jobs. But my salary was

just half of salary a regular employee in that position in other companies would get. I was used as a cheap laborer. The boss know that I was a new immigrant. He could cut my salary in half. He thought that we would take the job as long as it would enable us to settle down. Our expectations were not high at that time. We thought that we got a job right after we touched the ground. That was much better than many other immigrants. I still think that I was lucky with that experience.

Unfortunately, Wong's "luck" did not last. Within a year, his new firm decided to relocate to Hong Kong to reduce further their operating costs. Although they were long aware of the decision to relocate, management gave employees a month's notice, figuring that earlier notification might hurt their business. Although Wong was offered a job with the company in Hong Kong, he declined because the offer excluded his family and he didn't want to move so soon after migrating. A year after arriving, Wong found himself in the position of other new immigrants seeking a job in Sacramento. Thus, during his first year in the U.S., Wong experienced both salary discrimination and loss of a job through "off-shoring" — in this case, in what is considered to be the most rapidly growing sector of the economy.

Receiving a month's severance pay and relying on his ingenuity, diligence, and technical skills, Wong began his job search. Using contacts he had made previously, he continued to participate in the monthly meetings of a software users' group he had joined earlier. Shortly after presenting a software project to the group, two members in the seminar offered him a consulting project. Within two months, Wong had located temporary employment, demonstrating the importance of developing contacts outside of the enclave:

> There is also a lesson to be learned by immigrants in my experience. They cannot just go around within the Chinese circle. It was lucky that I have technical skills. My relations with other people outside the circle helped me a lot. I found myself a job of writing computer program for a company within two months. It happened like this. I used a set of software before. In order to improve technique, I took part in the users' group activities. I continued to participate in the users' group monthly seminars after I lost my first job. I presented one of my projects and new ideas in the group's monthly seminars. I took it as an opportunity to advertise myself. Many people still believed the talent of the oriental people. And they especially appreciated my knowledge and courage. One day right after my presentation, two gentlemen walked up to me and asked if I could help them with a project. I said, "I'll try." And I willingly accepted their project. It was a Thursday. I asked them when they would need [it]. They told me that they would be very happy if I could have it ready the following Monday. They were still not quite sure about whether I could finish it. I held my breath and did not say anything. I came home and began working on it. The next Monday, they were able to use the project in their presentation. They are very proud of that. They asked me how much they should pay me. I told them the amount I demanded. They said OK. However, they could not pay right away in cash. They gave a choice of three payments in cash or a . . . computer right away. I decided to take the computer. I considered it as my "rice bowl." I used it as my tool for future projects. I was

very happy that I had my own equipment again and [could] find the way to survive.

Wong received a number of contracts from these contacts, including a season in the accounting department at Campbell's Soup Company, while he and his wife Lin continued to search for more permanent employment. They both located jobs with the Sacramento City Unified School District as teaching assistants in a local high school. Although they are overqualified for the positions — as Wong noted, without a California teaching credential they could not even teach high school — they were grateful to obtain positions which at least used some of their former training.

Wong and Lin's diligence, capability, and skills began to pay off within the school district. Lin was promoted to a teaching associate once her university degree from China was accepted and her ability as a bilingual professor of English was recognized. Similarly, after recognizing Wong's skills as a computer scientist, the school district created a special position for him as a computer specialist in their multilingual program.

As a new immigrant, Wong stressed the need to continue to demonstrate his ability to his supervisors. Although he is overqualified for the jobs available to him, Wong believes that hard work and unrelenting effort will help him obtain a job comparable to his skills and intellectual ability, as well as survive in a competitive society:

> I think that my ability and integrity have won the trust of my superiors. I am expecting another promote soon. There are more and more people know me. They are very surprised about what I have done and what I can do. . . . I am like a tiger which had been lured out of the jungle and trapped in the desert. I cannot go to teach university. Not even can I teach high school. I have been put in positions which I am overqualified for. But I continue selling myself. More people come to know better. I received offers from three departments. I am waiting to take the best offer. It seems that I would get a higher position designed for me. I work very hard and with my best effort devote to the job. But some people said I need not do that. You see, even in America, you can also hear such sayings as: "You do what you pay for." "Don't do anything beyond you duty." In America, you can also find "bureaucracy," low efficiency and low motivation. I don't want to follow that trend. I think I still need to do what ever I can to develop myself and promote myself. Perhaps, I will stop and take it easy when I feel that I can't do anything else. But now I wish to do whatever I can. That is the best way to survive in this competitive society.

Unwilling to rest on his recent promotion, Wong next took and passed the exam to obtain a teaching credential for vocational school and community college. Then, in addition to his job as a computer specialist in the school district, Wong obtained a part-time position at the local vocational school, which is funded by the county, where he teaches three classes in computer programming. He described the reception his classes received when word spread throughout the Chinese immigrant community that bilingual classes in technical skills were being offered:

> Last week I began my first class. When the news that a Chinese teacher is teaching a computer course is spread in the Chinese community, many people

came to see me and ask to be in the class. There were 75 students enrolled. The vocational school once worried about that they might not have enough students. Now they are afraid that they might not be able to handle the students.

Because of the success of his classes at the vocational school, Wong next approached the Sacramento Chinese Community Service Center (SCCSC) and suggested that they offer a class in computers to new Chinese immigrants. The center was receptive to his suggestion and Wong offered several classes in computer programming there. Again the response was enthusiastic on the part of Chinese immigrants. Because of student demand, the center quickly added a third class in computer skills, in addition to starting a waiting list for students wishing to enroll. Wong attributes the success of his classes to the fact that they are taught both in Chinese and English, enabling new immigrants who do not speak English to acquire valuable technical skills for employment:

> Many Chinese immigrants want to learn technical skills. Although there are many such kind of schools, but none [of] them teaches those skills in both Chinese and English. If the center can offer more technical skills classes for them, that would be a tremendous help. Many Chinese had tried the other schools but their English language ability was not good enough to survive that class. I personally know a number of them went to those schools but they later dropped out.

Lin, Wong's wife, has had a similar experience teaching English to new Chinese immigrants at the SCCSC, where she is now employed as a teaching assistant. According to Lin, and identifying a situation we found to be common among unemployed Mien, generally only new Chinese immigrants with some knowledge of basic English will be able to follow the ESL courses offered at adult schools because they usually are taught in English. For immigrants with no understanding of English, they are, as she put it, "usually a waste of time." Thus, to more effectively impart basic English-speaking skills to new immigrants who have little or no knowledge of the language, Lin teaches survival English in both Chinese and English to her students at the center. Stressing the need to teach new immigrants English in a bilingual fashion, based on her 20 years of experience in teaching English to Chinese, Lin described her success thus far at the center:

> In Community Service Center we teach survival English by using both languages. I have worked there for a few years. During this period, actually students with real difficulties all depended on my help. They said that I could really help them. Because many of them could only understand small percentage of what the teacher explained in English. They had to come and ask me. In China, we use our mother-tongue to help understand English. Learning English for adults is different from children who rely on imitation. Adults have to count on understanding or comprehension. If you can explain to them in their mother language the meaning, they will understand better. I can give you an example. Once the teacher tried to explain the meaning of "probation" to the students. She spent about 10 minutes on it. There was still a lot of confusion even though the students in that class were "advanced students." So the desperate teacher asked me to come over and help. I just simply told them the three Chinese characters for "probation." Immediately I heard a sigh of relief from the students. . . . Why

shouldn't we give them a chance to start? Many immigrants don't understand English. They can only work in the kitchen as dishwashers for all their lives.

In recognizing the need to provide bilingual English language training to new immigrants, Lin also suggested an important factor that she believes contributes to her effectiveness in working with new immigrants. As a recent newcomer herself, Lin has experienced the challenges and problems facing new immigrants. Thus she is able to anticipate, recognize, and identify with their needs, interpreting them through the same cultural perspective. As she described,

> People born in America will never understand the situation of these people. People who are doing well here for a long time do not care about the new immigrants either. We have a strong sympathetic feeling for them. Wong opens a computer class for them using both English and Chinese. There is no previous case of such sort. I do not mean that many of the social workers here do not care about the new immigrants. I should say many of them have the sympathy for them and hope to help them. [They have] good intentions but not the understanding of the people nor the feeling of being in the same position of an immigrant. [They have] a heart of love but not the feeling. It is hard for [them] to really understand the subtle feeling of the immigrants. I myself understand that feeling. When a new immigrant has not been accepted into the class, I will try every efforts to help them get into the class.

Wong and Lin attribute their successful adjustment to their technical and language skills. Moreover, as a computer scientist, Wong felt that having technical skills, rather than proficient language skills, was the key factor in finding employment. He conceded, however, that basic literacy in English was crucial for adjustment to the new society. In fact, Wong's bilingual ability has enabled him to find work in a related field that both utilizes his technical skills and enables him to teach these skills to other new immigrants to find employment. Thus, bilingual ability has enabled Wong and Lin to find employment outside of the enclave and become social service providers in key delivery agencies.

At the same time, they consider themselves to be extremely fortunate in their settlement process, especially in relation to their fellow immigrants, many of whom are also highly skilled. Given their work with newcomers and sensitivity to the immigrant experience, Wong and Lin were well aware of unemployment and underemployment in the Chinese immigrant community in Sacramento. Many doctors, professors, engineers, and other skilled professionals, lacking English-speaking ability and services to help them convert or upgrade their skills, remain unemployed or trapped in low-skilled, enclave jobs, as detailed by Wong and Lin:

> *Lin:* I can give you a list of more than 20 people who were doctors, professors and engineers currently without job. In the past few years among over 100 students of classes, 50 percent of them received higher education [university graduates]. Although many of them studied Russian in the 1950s [and don't not know English well], they are well-educated people with experiences and skills. Why shouldn't this society accept them?

Wong: Our daughter's girl friend's father who was graduated from the military engineering academy, worked once as janitor. He also worked at the seafood processing factory, cutting fish with a knife. I can't imagine what was in their mind and what that would feel like if they thought about the past as intellectuals.

Lin: The parents of another girl friend of our daughter's were both doctors in Guangzhou, China. The mother was a physician in the children hospital. Now she is working at the sewing factory with very low pay. The father now works as a cook at a restaurant near the Raley store.

Wong: My professor [from China] is working at the oldest gas station in San Francisco. The pumps are still manually operated. Younger people don't work there. His boss is a Chinese. He is one the few employees remain there. His wife was a lecturer in China. Now she is working as a housekeeper in a doctor's family. They tried to comfort themselves by saying that at least they have stable incomes. And they earn as much as we do. Their children came to join them here one year after they arrived. As I said earlier, many Chinese immigrants came here for the future of their children. They moved to America after us. We talked with them before we left. We know their feelings. Among the age group from 40 to 60 many people have this kind of experiences.

In addition to economic difficulties, the downward mobility experienced by many new Chinese immigrants in Sacramento is often accompanied by psychological difficulties, such as low self-esteem. In more severe cases, prolonged underemployment impedes the integration process, resulting in withdrawal and isolation from family, friends, and public life of the mainstream society, as described by Lin:

One of our Chinese student's in-laws who were college teachers [in China], now they both work at the laundry and cleaning store. They often work in the environment with the temperature of 90° F. They came to America in 1967. They have worked there for more than 20 years. That kind of work burden has changed their personality and attitude towards the society. They have developed a bad temper. They don't want to socialize with others. We can say that people who are more active in social activities are those who suffered less psychological pressures. People who have been suppressed to the bottom of society are not willing to contact others. The daughter knows her father's feeling and position. Within the family, no one would go against her father's will because they know that the family was the only place her father can have some authority and self-esteem. He was a teacher. He was used to giving talks to others. Now, here in the United States there is no one wherever would listen to him.

Perhaps the most discouraging problem associated with underemployment, which Wong and Lin identified, is the waste of human talent found in the Chinese immigrant community. The lack of work or underemployment of skilled professionals, such as doctors and teachers, results not only in a loss to individuals in fulfilling their potential, but to the larger Chinese immigrant community, which could use this talent in fulfilling unmet needs.

For individuals as pragmatic as Wong and Lin, an obvious and effective strategy for harnessing this talent is for the government to take an active role in identifying and employing new immigrants' skills in providing social services to the immigrant community. While these jobs initially may not match the positions held by new immigrants in their homeland, they would at least be related to their skills and training. Moreover, these jobs would provide new immigrants with a psychological boost, enhancing feelings of self-worth and acceptance through providing worthwhile service to their new society. In addition, hiring new immigrants with appropriate skills to provide social services would increase the effectiveness of these services through enhanced communication in a culturally appropriate manner between bilingual service providers and new-immigrant clientele. Finally, hiring new immigrants with technical skills could help the larger society fill unmet needs in various sectors, as Wong outlines:

> I think the government's policy toward immigrants should adopt some active methods. The government agencies should tried to discover talented people among the immigrants and use them properly according to their abilities. Let them contribute whatever they can to the society. The passive method of assistance by giving them welfare would make them become lazy . . .
>
> I don't think that you need to force them into the American society. You can let them play their role within a certain boundary. For example, there are many engineers who don't have U.S. licenses. If they cannot be the chief engineers, can they be the associate engineers? If doctors from other countries cannot open clinics here, can they be assistant doctors working in the clinics? Professors among the immigrants can be a force working to improve bilingual education and help the children's of immigrants. Many of those people have rich experiences. I know that there is a lack of math teachers in high schools. Many of the unqualified people were hired. But there are so many qualified people among the immigrants who have not been used. . . . I know that there are several Chinese immigrants who were doctors before, working in a clinic. Although they were not licensed doctors and they work there under another doctor, many immigrants prefer to see them. The reason is that they can communicate with these "associate doctors" better. These "associate doctors" do not earn as much as the license doctor. Perhaps only half or a third. But it is much better than working in gas stations or restaurants. Their special skill can be use to serve the society. They feel that they were also saved. It is very important to the new immigrants that they feel that the society really need them. This psychology comfort is much more important than earning more money. I have been saying this again and again. I hope the government and its agencies should realize that.

Committed to helping new immigrants adjust and unwilling to wait for government assistance, Wong again took the initiative and started his own "survival class" for newcomers. Drawing on their own experiences, Wong provided instruction in computer skills as well as strategic suggestions for job hunting, and Lin offered help with English. The class also provided newcomers with culturally familiar camaraderie and the hospitality of Wong's household. With the poignant exception of Wong's former professor from

China, all of the "seminar" members are now employed, with some earning higher salaries than Wong, as he proudly reported:

> Last year, for about three or four months I held seminars on survival strategies at my home for Chinese new comers once a month. I invited them to come free of charge. I felt like that I was back to the university advising a group of graduate students again. . . . Among them were a retired soldier from Taiwan, a Chinese student graduate from Pennsylvania with BS, and a student with a Master Degree. All together we had eight people. My wife cooked meals for them. They did not need to pay anything. I donated my time and Lin donated her service. I don't know why I took all the "trouble" to do that. Perhaps, the only possible benefit for me, or in another word the "selfish intention," was that I hope that they would become successful someday. They can be my partners. . . .
>
> When I came up with the idea of holding the seminar I told my former professor in Oakland by phone. He said that was a brilliant idea. I said that I had to ask him to come all the way to Sacramento and help me with the seminar. He was more than happy to accept the invitation. He is over 60 years old. Each month he took the Greyhound bus to Sacramento. After the seminar he would stay a night at our house before he return to work in Oakland. It seemed that he saw the light of hope. After one month, he took out more than $1,000 from the bank and bought a computer. Every one of us were quite enthusiastic about this workshop. I encouraged my old professor by saying, "your magic sword will never retire. And you were our teacher before. We need you to work together with us." By now every one, except him, has found a job. Some of them get higher pay than me.

As is apparent from the initiative they have taken in their own lives and in working with new immigrants, Wong and Lin were aware of the limitations of both government and community-based services for new Chinese immigrants. They felt that initial financial assistance would provide new immigrants with needed resources for the most difficult period of initial settlement, though they realize it is not a long-term solution. Similar to our other respondents, however, they also thought welfare assistance was inequitably distributed, favoring some new immigrants over others. The lack of assistance was particularly detrimental to mainland Chinese, like themselves, who came without any financial capital.

Moreover, Wong felt that except for the Sacramento Chinese Community Service Center, local Chinese political and cultural organizations represent neither the larger Chinese community nor the interests of newcomers. Cultural and social organizations, although useful in providing classes in Chinese culture, art, and language, are also limited. As they cater primarily to the interests and needs of established and often well-to-do Chinese Americans, Wong sees them as less relevant to the urgent survival needs of new immigrants. Similarly, Chinese political organizations primarily represent the interests of long-settled Chinese Americans who are voting citizens, leaving new immigrants without a political voice.

The most effective strategies for initial survival and settlement, according to Wong and Lin, are for new immigrants to acquire basic literacy in English and technical skills for

locating employment. This can be done most effectively through bilingual instruction. In the community of new Chinese immigrants there already are people who are qualified and willing to provide these services. Thus, it is appropriate to complete Wong and Lin's story with two basic policy recommendations offered by these astute experts on this community. As Wong expressed for both of them:

> I have two suggestions for the government language and skills training program. First, the government can use more qualified people among the immigrants to teach new immigrants English. Using only adult schools and American teachers are not enough. Using teachers from the immigrants will not only help the teaching and learning process, but also provide employment opportunities for new immigrants. Second, the technical skills training program can also hire qualified people from the immigrants. I am sure there are many people like myself out there. The money which the government spend on job training programs would also help creating jobs for immigrants. The authorities of the vocational school told me that they need more people like us who are bilingual very badly. They asked me to recommend possible candidates for the job.

CULTIVATING IMMIGRANT TALENT: MATCHING WORK AND SKILLS

Although some regional differences existed between mainland, Hong Kong, and Taiwanese immigrants, generally the new Chinese immigrants are relatively highly educated and trained, with technical, manufacturing, service and employment experience. Given their educational and occupational backgrounds, the high levels of unemployment and underemployment they experienced in Sacramento was striking. In addition to having low-skilled, low-paying jobs with little or no medical benefits, opportunity to speak English, and few possibilities for advancement, our respondents frequently faced exploitative and discriminatory working conditions. The few who were able to break into primary-sector employment faced discriminatory hiring and work practices as well.

Few government social services are available to Chinese immigrants during their initial settlement, and, except for the Sacramento Chinese Community Service Center, our respondents were generally unaware of the services and community-based provider organizations that do exist. Their confinement to the largely non-English-speaking informal networks of the ethnic economic enclave, the lack of Chinese media, and their dispersed neighborhoods in Sacramento contributed to these immigrants' unawareness of available assistance.

The lack of resources available to Chinese immigrants led to a heavy reliance on the immediate family, as well as on long-settled extended family members, although the immediate family was tremendously overburdened. Parents worked exhausting jobs to put their children through school and adult children languished in enclave employment to support older parents, postponing their skill acquisition for mainstream employment. Ironically, although many Chinese immigrants had long-settled family members in the U.S. who were successful and prosperous, their current values, concerns, and social positions

made them less likely to identify with and assist the new immigrants, which increased our respondents' feelings of estrangement from them.

In light of these findings, new Chinese immigrants would benefit almost immediately from programs that would take advantage of their existing skills to accelerate integration and self-sufficiency. First and foremost, the GAIN program should be made available to Chinese immigrants without their need to be on welfare. It could specifically focus on supplementing, updating, and adapting their existing scientific, technical, and manufacturing skills for eventual employment in the mainstream economy. Moreover, GAIN could redirect physicians, doctors, and engineers to recertification programs or retrain them for job placement in related fields, where they could more closely realize and use their existing skills. In addition, effective language programs must be provided in conjunction with GAIN's job training and placement services to increase the likelihood of mainstream employment.

Second, and related to the above, effective community-based organizations providing employment services need to be targeted and funded. The Sacramento Chinese Community Service Center is one such organization whose recent reorganization and initial success is based largely on job training courses in technical skills and ESL classes taught by several multilingual Chinese immigrants. Moreover, the SCCSC emphasizes employment outside of the ethnic enclave. While the center is not always successful, it and other such organizations that try to implement this goal should be encouraged and supported through state monitoring and funding.

Third, the underutilization of the talents and skills found in the Chinese immigrant community is a tremendous waste of human resources. Drawing on Wong and Lin's experience, we recommend targeting and employing increased numbers of qualified and talented immigrants in key social service delivery programs, particularly English language acquisition and job training programs, schools, and health care clinics. Bilingual teachers are a crucial requirement for effective language acquisition, as demonstrated by the Mien who were employed, as well as by the success of the ESL classes at the SCCSC. Similarly, Wong's overflowing programming classes attest to the effectiveness of transmitting these skills in a multilingual fashion. Employing the skills of Chinese immigrants would be a win-win situation for the state and the Chinese immigrant community.

Almost all the Chinese immigrants we interviewed lacked any form of health care coverage, and generally treated themselves except in the case of serious illness. They, like other groups in our study, would benefit from the separation of Medi-Cal coverage from income support programs, and the rechanneling of Medi-Cal funds into a universal health insurance plan to cover all Californians.

Finally, the increased and vigilant enforcement of fair labor practice laws and antidiscrimination statutes in hiring and employment is urgently needed in the case of Chinese immigrants, who are often employed in businesses that are the most notorious abusers of fair labor practices. Enforcement of labor laws frequently is their only hope for humane working conditions and equal and fair treatment. Similarly, antidiscrimination in hiring will help to open up job opportunities in the mainstream economy, providing an important arena for Chinese immigrants to hear and practice English.

Such a policy mix, which emphasizes utilization of immigrants' existing skills in job training programs, in combination with bilingual English language training, increased employment in key social service delivery programs, expanded access to health care and enforcement of nondiscriminatory hiring statutes, should facilitate the movement of Chinese immigrants into mainstream employment and self-sufficiency.

Chapter 7

WORK, WELFARE, AND THE NEW IMMIGRATION: RESTRUCTURING STATE POLICY

Today, work and family life are far different than they were during earlier decades of this century, when traditional welfare policies were designed. The life chances for California's new immigrants are being shaped by three key features of this environment that are affecting all American households. First, to insure household survival, an increasing number of women must work. In addition to the rising number of female-headed households, between 1960 and 1988 the proportion of married mothers who worked rose from 26 to 62 percent (Jencks and Peterson, 1991:58). Second, the number of unionized jobs in large-scale manufacturing, which were central to the absorption of new immigrants earlier in this century, have steadily declined in the face of the globalization of manufacturing and rising off-shore production. Third, employment growth in the amorphous service sector, in California and nationally, has occurred in both high-paid, professional/technical, business/financial services, and the kind of low-paid work held by most of the new immigrants we have interviewed, with little in between. This pattern of economic development has been described by such metaphors as "dual economy", "dual city," or "social polarization," which evoke the specter of future social unrest if government policies fail to mediate the situation.

The stories told by the diverse "new immigrants" we studied reveal subtle differences in each group's adaptation to these changed circumstances. They have shown that men and women, urban and rural migrants, immigrant entrepreneurs and those who work for them, as well as earlier and more recent migrants within each ethnic group, differ considerably in both the resources they bring with them and the context of their reception in California. The differences our subjects spoke of express the increasing significance of gender relations and the renegotiation of gender roles within households as women in each group enter labor markets in record numbers to insure household survival. The social class and educational backgrounds of our subjects, and their past and present experiences in the changing world of work, are important elements of their stories and key ingredients in the new lives they are creating.

The restructuring of labor-market opportunities in the state and nation is central to our understanding of the changing relationship between immigration, work, and welfare in contemporary California. Despite the cultural, class, gender, and generational differences we found between as well as within the five groups we studied, we also found that California's new immigrants, as much if not more than established residents, have been similarly and profoundly affected by three key features of today's economy: the expansion of women's role in the labor market; growing ethnic segmentation of work opportunities;

and rapid growth in low-paid service work. The major structural similarity in the stories we heard is that for all five of our groups, the changing economic structure has served up a limited number of occupational niches. The vast majority of our respondents serve as unskilled labor in ethnic employment enclaves, or as low-paid domestic or other personal service workers in the mainstream economy in workplaces like hotels, motels, and restaurants; a more limited number work as immigrant entrepreneurs or as community service providers for members of their own ethnic group.

Most of the Mexican women and men, Salvadoran refugees, and second-wave refugees from Vietnam in our sample are either unemployed or relegated to low-paid employment in secondary labor-market jobs in the service sector. Of these three groups, only the Vietnamese, because of their officially recognized immigration status as political refugees, have been able to rely on public assistance to help meet their daily needs. Most of the mainland Chinese immigrants we interviewed, despite their relatively high levels of education and professional and technical skills, also are currently either unemployed or underemployed in ethnic businesses owned by new immigrant entrepreneurs from Taiwan or Hong Kong. These highly educated migrants are especially critical of their work experiences in enclave businesses, faulting their Chinese employers for taking advantage of their vulnerability as new immigrants who lack financial capital, English language skills, and citizen rights.

The new immigrants from mainland China have been equally critical of U.S. immigration and social policies that make welfare available to subsidize the daily needs of some transnational migrants, like Southeast Asian refugees, while leaving other new immigrants, such as themselves, to face a series of untenable conditions: underfunded and culturally inadequate English-language acquisition programs, exploitation by immigrant entrepreneurs, underemployment in the mainstream economy, or unemployment and growing economic marginality. These migrants fault current policies for wasting their skills, denying them the opportunity to create a better life. In this respect, the mainland Chinese migrants in Sacramento echo the concerns voiced by the Salvadorans we interviewed in San Francisco, who are unable to use their skills here because of lack of certification, discrimination in employment, and the anemic state of the California economy.

The employment picture for Mien refugees offers an interesting variation on this theme. Two-thirds of the Mien refugees in our sample are completely dependent on welfare for household survival. The remaining one-third are engaged in three types of work: as owners of small ethnic businesses such as grocery stores, as providers of professional services for institutions that serve the Mien population, or as skilled workers. Those employed in the latter two types of work obtained jobs largely through the successful mediation of their settlement by the coordinated efforts of the GAIN program in Sacramento, a mandatory program for recipients of AFDC and general assistance that has linked income support to programs that combine ESL, job training, and job referral. In our view, if welfare can be restructured to "work" for the Mien time-travellers we interviewed in Sacramento, it can be restructured to work flexibly for California's other new immigrant and refugee groups.

In the changed socioeconomic context we have described throughout this study, the fundamental premise underlying traditional social welfare policies — that men are the key household breadwinners, earning a sufficient income to allow women to care for children,

the sick, and their families — has lost both its accuracy as a description of family life and its legitimacy as a policy justification. The exhortation to preserve "family values" may reassure those who are dismayed by the transformations of work and family life captured in our ethnographies of new immigrant households, but it can do little to alter the structural basis of these transformations. Given the reduced availability of women as unpaid caregivers as they increasingly enter the labor market, the need for social services to provide care to children, the sick, and the elderly has increased dramatically, precisely when the fiscal basis of support for such services and the cultural support for the welfare state as an institution have reached an all-time low.

Yet the circumstances we have described will require a refashioning rather than a rejection of the welfare state — a restructuring of today's relatively inflexible welfare system into a more flexible combination of services. Such a refashioning must take into account the changing character of work and family life that are part of today's world.

A FIVE-POINT STRATEGY FOR RESTRUCTURING WELFARE POLICIES

The findings of our two-year ethnographic study form the basis of a five-point strategy for restructuring state policies that most immediately affect the life chances of many of California's new immigrants and refugees]. The policy strategy spelled out in the remainder of this chapter explains:

- Why it is necessary to restructure the various entitlements for many of the state's political refugees and some of its low-income new immigrants by separating Medi-Cal from income support programs like AFDC, and linking the former to comprehensive health care reform that provides coverage to all California residents.
- Why learning English is central to the successful adaptation of new immigrants and how ESL and bilingual education programs in California can be designed to more effectively achieve this goal.
- Why vigorous enforcement of existing laws against unfair labor practices and antidiscrimination statutes in hiring and employment is needed and can be expected to have beneficial effects on English-language acquisition.
- How the remaining social welfare programs can be flexibly combined in response to the cultural and situational differences among California's new immigrants and refugees to help each achieve self-sufficiency.
- Why it is desirable to expand employment opportunities for new immigrants within key service delivery systems affecting them, namely, schools, ESL and bilingual education programs, employment training programs, day care facilities, and health care clinics.

The work in which our respondents are engaged is clearly affected by several institutional structures that affect the life chances of California's new immigrants: the restrictive ethnic employment enclaves in which many new immigrants work; discrimination

in hiring and working conditions outside these enclaves; the entitlements and restrictions that apply to one's immigration status, particularly welfare entitlements that favor refugees over immigrants, and some refugees over others; differential access to ESL, bilingual education, employment training, and community service programs that vary widely in effectiveness; and the ethnic segmentation and recomposition of the workforce.

These common institutional barriers to social mobility are addressed in our five recommendations, which also take into account the differences among the five groups we studied resulting from their particular migration and resettlement experiences.

1. Universal Health Care

Many of California's new immigrants, particularly Southeast Asian refugees, facing the choice between work or health, have chosen to remain on AFDC or general assistance for extended periods primarily because it entitles them to Medi-Cal coverage. Although they are quite willing to work, and prefer work to welfare, they have been unable to find jobs that include employee health care benefits. If they were made part of a universal health care system for all California residents, a major incentive for them to remain unemployed would be eliminated. The health care needs of California's other new immigrants and refugees from Latin America and Asia who are currently working in secondary labor market and ethnic enclave jobs that lack benefits would also be met by their inclusion in a universal coverage system. If the public funds currently spent on Medi-Cal were separated from funds spent on income support programs (like AFDC) by altering eligibility requirements, they could be channeled into a more general health care delivery system such as the universal health coverage plans now being debated and shaped at both national and state government levels.

The universality of coverage would reduce the stigma that currently separates Medi-Cal patients from other sick people, and remove the policy basis of the antagonism we found between uninsured new immigrants and covered political refugees. Moreover, separating health provision from AFDC would eliminate the forced choice between work and health, a major incentive for choosing welfare. Finally, the fiscal basis of the consolidated system would be made more secure by adding the intergovernmental support devoted to the current Medi-Cal system for unemployed low-income Californians and political refugees to a more general system for financing universal health care coverage.

2. Reforming Bilingual Education

Effective bilingual education is the one state-provided service needed by all the new immigrant groups we studied. English as a Second Language and other bilingual education programs in California are currently provided by a wide array of both voluntary nonprofit and profit-making organizations, which are often financed under contract using state and federal funds, in addition to the public school programs financed by the state Department of Education. One of our major findings is that the language acquisition programs available to California's new immigrants vary considerably in effectiveness. Among our Mien sample, for example, some of the refugees who knew more than one Southeast Asian

language when they came to California encountered ineffectual ESL programs, failed to learn English, and remain welfare-dependent. Others, former highland farmers who knew only the unwritten Mien language, are now fluent in English and employed in skilled or professional work. The crucial difference we found between them was that the successful Mien had all been enrolled in effective English-language acquisition classes with instructors or teachers' aides who spoke Mien or Laotian, while not one of the unemployed Mien respondents who had enrolled in such classes had a similar advantage. The successful Mien who could speak English were able to make use of additional refugee assistance programs linking income support to the job training and referral components of the GAIN program to become employed and move toward economic self-sufficiency.

Nearly all of the respondents in each of the five groups we studied regarded the acquisition of English language skills as critical to their future success and mobility in this country. Those who have learned English regard it as their major achievement and their principal resource for the future; those who have not learned the language regard this lack as their major impediment and source of frustration and dissatisfaction. Learning English is too important to both California's new immigrants and the future economic vitality and social stability of the state and nation to be left to chance. Yet, although all of the newly arrived immigrant adults and children we studied needed access to effective initial bilingual programs, only the legally recognized refugees were likely to be enrolled in such programs in significant numbers. Legal immigrants used these programs in smaller numbers, having learned about their availability primarily through the outreach efforts of community-based organizations. Undocumented workers from Mexico and El Salvador tended to avoid these programs either because they feared deportation or their casual employment status and irregular work schedules made it difficult to attend classes.

Given the importance of English language acquisition, universal access to effective ESL and bilingual education programs should be made a major state policy priority, with diverse enough programs to accommodate the increasing diversity of the state's population. Because the programs our subjects used varied considerably in effectiveness, we recommend regular auditing and review of programs that rely on state funds to insure that new immigrants have teachers who not only know their language and culture but understand the uniqueness of their historical experiences with transnational migration. Our interviews with Mien refugees and transnational migrants from mainland China suggest that recruitment of bilingual teachers and teaching assistants from among the immigrants and refugees themselves would considerably improve the success rate of these language programs. Regular state monitoring and review of state-funded programs will insure that the immigrants and refugees relying on them have the greatest chance to learn English as a result of their efforts, and prevent the squandering of resources on ineffectual programs. Access to culturally appropriate bilingual teaching assistants for children in public schools is particularly important and may help to prevent the problems that some new immigrant and refugee youth have experienced, such as the gang-related activities among the second-wave Vietnamese and Mien youth in our Sacramento samples.

3. Work and Language Acquisition: Regulating the Workplace

Our ethnographies of Mexican migrants, undocumented Salvadoran refugees, and new immigrants from mainland China showed that the failure of many of California's new immigrants to learn English is also related to their lack of opportunity to speak English outside of class because they live in linguistically homogeneous neighborhoods and work in either ethnic enclave businesses or ethnically segregated workplaces in the mainstream economy. Better enforcement of open housing laws and more effective enforcement in two specific areas of labor law would increase the likelihood that new immigrant workers with limited English-language skills will have a greater opportunity to speak and learn English in their workplaces.

First, California's immigrant entrepreneurs, who rely entirely on a non-English-speaking workforce drawn either from their own or other new immigrant groups, should be required to comply with statutes regulating minimum wages, working hours, child labor practices, and workplace safety and sanitary conditions. This may lead to the shutdown of exploitative workplaces — such as recently occurred when a group of Latino immigrant apparel workers in Los Angeles successfully sued their mostly Thai immigrant sweatshop owners (Silverstein, 1992: A16) — but the short-term cost in increased unemployment must be weighed against the longer-term benefits likely to result from vigorous enforcement of laws against unfair labor practices. Second, vigorous enforcement of laws against discriminatory hiring and working conditions by mainstream employers can be expected to improve the workplace context in which English-language skills are acquired. Opening up more mainstream employment opportunities for new immigrants with limited English-language skills in positions that do not specifically require such skills will increase the frequency of the new immigrants' exposure to spoken English, and the likelihood that they will succeed in learning the language.

The call for vigorous regulation of the workplace is supported by the work experiences of our respondents employed in both the primary and secondary sectors of the mainstream economy, from Chinese computer scientists to Salvadoran and Mexican service workers. Our finding that ethnically segmented workplaces are a major barrier to English-language acquisition for both Latinos and Asians, as well as the bitter denunciations we heard concerning exploitative working conditions, suggest that we need to treat ethnic segmentation of labor markets and employment in enclave economies as a problem rather than a solution for many new immigrant workers.

4. Flexible Tailoring of Social Support

The social support needs of the groups we studied were often different, stemming from their different migration experiences and cultural backgrounds. For example, members of each of the three refugee groups, including the state's unrecognized Salvadoran refugees, experience recurrent psychological stress as a result of traumatic events in, and violent uprooting from, their homelands. Some of the Mexican women we interviewed had also been traumatized during their migration by abusive Mexican police officials, dishonest smugglers, and threatened or actual rapes. To cite another example of differences that have

policy relevance, not all of the Mien refugees need children's day-care services, since the continuing vitality of extended family networks enabled some grandparents living under the same roof to serve as baby sitters and care givers to young children. Often these large families were able to survive as household units by combining work and public assistance and providing their own day-care. At the opposite extreme, most of the Salvadoran refugees, whose family- and village-based social support networks were most overstressed by the fragmenting effects of their country's civil war, needed formal day-care services. Because of their largely undocumented status and limited incomes, however, they were the least likely to be able to purchase or receive day-care, or provide it on their own. These examples illustrate the need to flexibly combine social services for California's new immigrants and refugees to account for the differing needs of each group. In the discussion below we suggest ways to effectively combine social programs for each of the groups we studied.

Mexican Migrants

Few social services are either available to or used by Mexican transnational migrants to Sacramento. The only services currently used are Medi-Cal by some pregnant Mexican women and WIC for subsequent young infant care. Even these health care services tended to be avoided by most of the women we interviewed because of their inability to speak English, lack of awareness about the availability of services, or, in the case of undocumented migrants, fear of deportation. Both the men and a majority of the Mexican women with children we studied rely heavily on the informal social support provided by their extended family networks and more generally on the social ties forged in the Latino enclaves encompassing their jobs and their neighborhood. While these networks of affiliation and cultural support have enabled the new Mexican migrants to survive in California and have enlivened elements of Mexican culture that have long been part of the state's history, both the men and women we interviewed are becoming increasingly isolated from the larger U.S. society, adapting more to the existing binational Mexican community in California than to the economic and sociocultural mainstream. They live their daily lives apart from the rest of society in residential enclaves, and have become increasingly marginalized in enclave businesses or in secondary service-sector jobs requiring no use of English-language skills. This tends to breed a vicious cycle of marginality, as the very vitality of their cross-border cultural identity and their difficulty with English mark them as "others" and foster continuing discrimination against them in employment, housing, and basic respect. We found, further, that the family and neighborhood networks that the Mexican migrants in our study relied on for survival are becoming increasingly strained by the limited incomes found within the networks and by the heightened tensions between men and women as more and more women take jobs outside the home, forcing a renegotiation of traditional gender roles.

To combat their growing isolation and marginalization from mainstream society, we recommend that documented Mexican migrants be made eligible for health care through participation in the kind of universal system discussed above. In addition, we recommend increased state funding for bilingually staffed neighborhood and mobile health clinics

responsible for providing outreach and preventive care for Mexican migrants who currently tend to seek help only in the gravest of emergencies.

The services for which our Mexican respondents wish they were eligible are job training and bilingual education to help them move out of low-paying, secondary labor market jobs, rather than such supplementary social services as day-care and transportation assistance, which are already being provided by their family, friendship, and neighborhood networks. They (as well as members of other groups) thought it crucial to improve access to effective ESL programs for adults and bilingual education for children in the early grades of public schools; many see the ability to speak English as even more important than being documented to obtain the "good jobs" they all desired. Thus, we recommend providing the GAIN program to documented Mexican migrants in conjunction with bilingual education. This would entail separating GAIN — a mandatory program available only to recipients of Aid to Families with Dependent Children, like many of our second-wave Vietnamese and Mien refugees — from its currently exclusive connection to AFDC. By increasing the basic employment skills of new Mexican migrants through language acquisition programs and job training, and expanding their access to preventive and regular health care, they will be able to use lower-paid entry-level jobs to survive without being trapped by them, or forced to choose welfare instead of work in order to have access to health care.

Salvadoran Refugees

California's Salvadoran refugees pose a special problem for state policy makers. The undocumented Salvadoran refugees we interviewed face employment and language barriers similar to those faced by Mexican transnational migrants and new immigrants from mainland China. They also have experienced the war-related stresses that characterize the Vietnamese and Mien refugees we studied. Moreover, the protracted civil war in El Salvador has been an ongoing source of internal hostility and mistrust among migrating Salvadorans, undermining the viability of informal social networks as sources of social support. The high cost of living in their chosen destination, the "sanctuary" city of San Francisco, which has the highest housing costs in the state, has placed further stress on the Salvadorans' already strained informal social support networks. Yet because of their virtual underground legal status, the Salvadorans were the least likely among the groups we studied to use any state-provided health or social services. Because of the dynamics of United States foreign policy in Central America the Salvadorans are de facto refugees who lack de jure recognition; as such they are not entitled to the many forms of assistance available to officially recognized refugees, such as the Vietnamese and Mien, who use these services extensively. The Salvadorans in San Francisco's Mission District work largely in low-paid, secondary labor market jobs that lack benefits like health insurance. They live in tremendously overcrowded housing conditions, and avoid even the handful of social services like WIC for which they might apply, because of fear of deportation. Some of the Salvadorans we interviewed would like to return to El Salvador in the future, but many remain suspicious of the current "peace process," and nearly all are aware that the war-ravaged economy they fled offers even more-limited job opportunities than the currently recession-ridden California economy.

If the U.S. government were to grant refugee status to these undocumented migrants, we would recommend the same policy changes as we did for new Mexican immigrants. In addition, however, because of the weakened informal social support networks we found among the Salvadorans and the war-related traumas they have experienced, we recommend providing the full array of refugee assistance programs now available to legally recognized refugees under the federal Refugee Resettlement Program administered in California by the Department of Social Services (see Appendix).

Short of this recognition — which is a national rather than a state issue — state policymakers could initiate three more-limited actions to ameliorate the harsh living conditions we found among San Francisco's undocumented Salvadoran refugees. First, the state could offer special improvement grants for improved ESL and bilingual education programs to voluntary organizations operating in Salvadoran neighborhoods and to public schools serving large numbers of Central American refugees, provided the selected programs can be shown to be working well. Second, California regulatory bodies could vigorously enforce existing antidiscrimination statutes regulating unfair labor practices in order to reduce ethnic and linguistic segmentation in employment. Third, the state could establish eligibility criteria for selecting community-based organizations capable of contracting with it to deliver services (e.g., ESL and bilingual education, employment training and referral, vocational education, and child care), and fund programs with effective mechanisms for actively involving refugees in bilingual, informal settings. This would enable Salvadorans, as residents of Latino neighborhoods, to act without fear of deportation. Most of the Salvadorans we interviewed remain "underground," living completely apart from mainstream society and the community organizations that might become resources for their survival and self-affirmation. Connecting socially isolated refugees to mediating institutions at the grassroots level has proven beneficial to the Salvadoran refugees we interviewed who maintain ties to the Sanctuary Movement. This connection has helped them to learn English, find work, and obtain other needed material as well as socioemotional support.

Vietnamese Refugees

We found appreciable differences both among and between first- and second-wave Vietnamese refugees, the conditions they faced in migrating, and the changed context of their reception in the United States. The adjustment of first-wave settlers arriving after the fall of Saigon was relatively successful, owing in part to their class, educational, and occupational backgrounds, and in part to the more favorable context of their reception in less-uncertain economic times. Even among the first-wave refugees we found that the transition to U.S. society was often difficult, accompanied by forced departure, family separation, the need to adapt to a quite different culture, and gender and generational stress, as men and women and parents and children responded differently to the required renegotiation of gender and generational roles. Despite these difficulties, the relative economic success of first-wave Vietnamese, their active involvement in Southeast Asian mutual assistance associations, and their use of then-abundant refugee resettlement assistance to achieve household self-sufficiency contributed to the image of Vietnamese refugees as a "model minority," that smoothly adapted to U.S. society with limited

governmental assistance. Thus there is little understanding of the continuing adaptation problems experienced by second-wave Vietnamese refugees, who came to America later, with more-heterogeneous social backgrounds and fewer initial resources, and often after having spent years in Vietnamese reeducation camps or squalid Southeast Asian refugee camps. In addition to the usual cultural adjustment problems, the more-recently arrived refugees have encountered a climate of compassion fatigue, fueled by the deep recession and tightening of labor market opportunities. We found this latter group to be living in increasing isolation not only from mainstream society but also from the longer-term Vietnamese settlers who dominate the leadership of mutual assistance associations and other community-based organizations in Sacramento intended to serve Southeast Asian refugees. Some of these more recently arrived second-wave refugees have even been cut off from support by their own extended family members who arrived earlier and have achieved some degree of self-sufficiency.

In addition to the health care, language acquisition, and job training reforms described above, we recommend the following policy mix for second-wave Vietnamese refugees: 1) pressuring the federal government to maintain its current package of refugee assistance rather than cutting it back; 2) targeting middle-age second-wave Vietnamese refugees for English-language acquisition and job training programs rather than simply maintaining them on welfare, to reduce the pressures on their children to provide financial support to the extended family household while attending school; 3) focusing on the types of skills in job training programs that are most likely to make the refugees employable in the mainstream economy; 4) enforcing labor laws and antidiscrimination statutes to open up more employment opportunities in bilingual workplaces; and 5) funding research and dissemination programs to insure that the providers of mental health, social work, school counseling, and youth services are familiar with the special needs of second-wave Vietnamese refugees.

Mien Refugees

Among Sacramento's Mien highlanders from Laos we found extensive household dependence on welfare assistance, with two-thirds of the male heads of households in our sample unemployed and relying on food stamps, Medi-Cal, general assistance, AFDC assistance, and SSI payments to various members of their extended family households in order to survive. This pattern of welfare dependency, although somewhat less pronounced in the Bay Area, is a key component of the Mien survival strategy throughout California. Of the one-third of our Mien sample who were working males, half had entered the U.S. with transferrable skills, such as small business experience in urban settings. The remaining employed males, however, had the same limited rural agricultural backgrounds as a large majority of the unemployed Mien we studied. The crucial difference between these successful refugees and their unemployed counterparts was that the former had all been enrolled in effective English-language acquisition classes with instructors or teachers' aides who spoke Mien or Laotian, while not one of the unemployed Mien respondents who had enrolled in such classes had a bilingual instructor or aide who spoke either language. The successful Mien who could speak English were able to make use of additional refugee assistance programs linking income support to the job training and referral components of the GAIN program to become employed and move toward economic self-sufficiency.

In light of these findings, we strongly recommend that the ESL programs in which Mien refugees are enrolled be closely monitored to insure that their staffs include adequate numbers of bilingual instructors and teacher aides fluent in their clients' language. Moreover, all ESL programs supported by state funds should be subject to regular monitoring to insure their effectiveness. In a period of scarce resources, viable programs must be rewarded and ineffectual programs weeded out.

The Mien respondents we interviewed who previously worked in the U.S. but are now on welfare all gave lack of health insurance as their reason for leaving their jobs — providing further support for our recommendation to separate income support programs from Medi-Cal and absorb the latter into a universal health care system that would cover all Californians. Even if these two steps are taken, many Mien people will still need some types of social support. The greatest number are from rural villages, with little knowledge of or experience with Western culture — "time travelers" who have had to make the greatest cultural leap in coming to California from a preindustrial, tribal society. Since their extended family networks remain viable and their experience with mainstream employment is limited, we recommend spending less on the current supplemental services entitlements (e.g., day-care, transportation, emergency assistance, and optional county services) and channeling more into bilingual education, job training, referral and placement services, such as those currently provided through the GAIN program.

New Chinese Immigrants

Although we found some salient differences between Hong Kong, Taiwanese, and mainland Chinese immigrants to Sacramento, particularly the latter group's lack of any financial capital, generally they are relatively highly educated and trained individuals with technical, manufacturing and service skills, as well as employment experience. It was thus striking to discover the high levels of unemployment and underemployment all three groups experienced in Sacramento. Our respondents frequently faced exploitative and discriminatory working conditions whether they were employed in small businesses owned by new immigrant entrepreneurs from Taiwan or Hong Kong, or in mainstream employment. Working in the ethnic enclave excluded them from even hearing spoken English. Few social services are available to them during their initial settlement, and, except for one center, our respondents were generally unaware of the services and community-based provider organizations that do exist. Their confinement to the ethnic employment enclave, the lack of citywide Chinese media in Sacramento, and their dispersed neighborhoods contributed to these immigrants' unawareness of available assistance, and heavy reliance on the already overburdened immediate family. Long-settled extended family members in the U.S. were often unwilling to provide more than initial lodging and information about day-to-day living because of their differing values, concerns, and social positions, which increased our respondents' feelings of estrangement from their settled kin.

The underutilization of the talents and scientific, technical, and manufacturing skills found in the Chinese immigrant community is a tremendous waste of human resources. The skills of these individuals provide a base from which to accelerate their economic integration and self-sufficiency, which could be done by making the GAIN program available to supplement, update, and adapt their skills for eventual employment in the

mainstream economy. Moreover, GAIN could redirect physicians, doctors, and engineers to recertification programs, or retrain them for job placement in related fields where they can more closely use their existing skills. Effective ESL programs must be provided in conjunction with GAIN's job training and placement services to increase the likelihood of obtaining mainstream employment. In addition, the state should identify, fund, and monitor effective community-based organizations that provide services directed to placing Chinese immigrants in mainstream employment.

Almost all of the Chinese immigrants we studied lacked health care coverage. Except in the case of serious illness, they generally did not use medical care but treated themselves. A universal health insurance plan to cover all Californians would also provide new Chinese immigrants with urgently needed medical care coverage. Implementation of these recommendations, and enforcement of nondiscriminatory hiring and employment statutes, should facilitate the movement of Chinese immigrants from the ethnic enclave into mainstream employment so they can become self-sufficient.

5. Expanded Employment of New Immigrants in Policy Assessment and Delivery Systems

Employing more of the new immigrants in policy assessment and program delivery is an additional way to render state policy systems more flexible and effective in moving immigrants toward economic self-sufficiency. They are most aware of immigrants' needs and have the greatest concern for improving conditions in the key delivery systems providing state and local services to new immigrants, namely, schools, ESL and bilingual education programs, employment training programs for those with specific skills, day-care facilities, and health care clinics. The stories we heard from Mexican women, Chinese engineers, and Mien highlanders speak to the effectiveness of such workers in mobile health clinics, in teaching technical skills in fields like computer science, and as teacher aides in schools and ESL programs. Increased employment of new immigrants in bilingual school programs at the elementary level is especially crucial in light of a recent study of California bilingual education by Berman Weiler Associates that showed that by the time students with limited-English skills reach secondary schools, the schools cannot effectively deliver even the basic courses in math, science, and social sciences required for high school graduation (Asimov, 1992: A21).

A successful public-private partnership in San Francisco's Mission District that actively recruits and trains non-English-speaking newly arrived Central American and Mexican women to run day-care centers could serve as a model for designing appropriate new employment opportunities for new immigrants in other health, education, and welfare delivery arenas. The program, currently funded by a combination of grants from the state Department of Education and other public sources, as well as sizable corporate donations, is regarded as a notable example of how to substantially increase program effectiveness by training and employing new immigrants (Zane, 1991: A17).

One must caution, however, that shared nationality alone is an insufficient basis for allocating state funds to such partnerships, to which some of our respondents can attest. As careful assessment is an essential ingredient of effective policy design, we recommend that

the state regularly evaluate all programs intended to assist the resettlement, social adaptation, and economic integration of California's new immigrants and refugees in order to avoid waste, reassure skeptical taxpayers, overcome fears of social experimentation, and determine *what works, for whom, and why.* In the face of diminishing resources to fund and restructure effective programs, the need for policy evaluation research to legitimize state policies is now greater than ever. Our own experience with a bilingual, multicultural research team recruited for this two-year project suggests that employing new immigrants in the policy assessment research that will be needed to insure the accountability of new immigrant-related public-private partnerships will strengthen the quality of the research and the accuracy of the assessments.

CONCLUSION

We believe these recommendations constitute a coherent policy response that addresses both the root causes and complex consequences of the new immigration. The political feasibility of our recommendations, however, will depend on a clear understanding that key assumptions frequently made about the new immigration and about immigrants' relationship to work and welfare are plainly mistaken. Our policy proposals, rooted in study findings, strongly challenge the mistaken assumptions that must be confronted and corrected in public discourse if our policy proposals are to be taken seriously.

Accordingly, we end this policy study by identifying four myths we think it has debunked: (1) the belief that the ethnic enclave economy is an adequate employment channel, providing genuine economic opportunity for new immigrants; (2) the belief that new immigrant social networks always can be counted on to provide effective informal social support for California's new immigrant groups in the absence of formal social policy supports; 3) the belief that new immigrants and refugees are responsible for taking away jobs, when in fact structural changes in the global economy, significant cuts in defense spending, and welfare retrenchment have transformed the California labor market and reduced job opportunities; and 4) the belief that new immigrant integration will resolve itself in future generations in the absence of state policies. Taken together, these beliefs constitute a kind of mythology that denies the lived experience of the people to whom we have talked and from whom we have learned.

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Appendix

REFUGEES' ASSISTANCE, SOCIAL AND EMPLOYMENT SERVICE ENTITLEMENTS

The U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program under the authority of the California Department of Social Services (DSS) provides refugees cash assistance, food stamps, employment and training services and community resources with the goal of promoting self-sufficient family units.

Cash Assistance Programs

The following cash assistance programs are available to refugees who meet the eligibility requirements: AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children), SSI/SSP (supplemental security income/state supplemental program), and county General Assistance (GA) as well as Refugee Cash Assistance/Entrant Cash Assistance (RCA/ECA).

AFDC and SSI/SSP

For refugees, the eligibility criteria for these public assistance programs are the same as those for nonrefugees.

RCA/ECA

Refugees/entrants who do not qualify for the AFDC or SSI programs may be eligible for RCA/ECA for a maximum of eight months after their arrival date. This category of recipients is generally made up of single men and women, and couples without children. In order to receive RCA, refugees must register and participate in a state-approved employment training or language program and accept an appropriate offer of employment.

Local General Assistance

Refugees qualify for GA on the same basis as other residents. This program is county-funded and varies across counties.

Emergency Assistance Program

The EAP provides cash assistance to meet the emergency needs of intact families when both parents are unemployed and neither parent has a connection with the labor force.

Unaccompanied Minor (UM) Program

The county in which the minor is placed establishes protective legal custody for the child within 30 days after the child's arrival. The county welfare department has to ensure

that the child receives the full range of child welfare benefits and services provided to nonrefugee children in foster care.

Health Service Programs

Medical assistance costs are subject to reimbursement from the U.S. Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR) on the same basis as cash assistance. Costs for public health services such as referral to followup services, education and counseling, support services, health assessments, and clinical or technical services are covered. Current federal regulations provide funding to cover the overall state costs of providing medical assistance to eligible refugees during their first eight months in the U.S.

County Social Services

Refugees may be eligible for the following county-administered social services:

Federally mandated

Information and Referral; Emergency Response; Family Maintenance, Protective Services for Children; Protective Services for Adults; Family Reunification, Permanent Placement; Out-of-Home Care Services for Adults; and In-Home Supportive Services.

Optional

Special Care for Children in Their Own Homes; Home Management and Other Function Educational Services; Employment/Education/Training; Services for Children with Special Problems; Service to Alleviate or Prevent Family Problems; Sustenance; Housing Referral Services; Legal Referral Services; Diagnostic Treatment Services for Children; Special Services for the Blind; Special Services for Adults; Services for Disabled Individuals; and Services for County Jail Inmates.

The total level of social services available is subject to yearly appropriations by the state legislature, Congress, and the individual county boards of supervisors.

Since October 1, 1984, ORR has allowed states to expend up to 15 percent of their Refugee Social Services allocations to provide the aforementioned and other nonemployment-related services to refugees.

Refugee-specific Employment Services System

RESS is designed to assure that the employment services needs of refugees are properly determined and met through a planned set of services designed to result in self sufficiency. On an annual basis, ORR provides the state with Refugee Social Services (RSS) and Targeted Assistance (TA) funding. These funds are allocated to the counties to provide the following services to refugees:

Client Intake Services
Support Services (child care, transportation and work-related)
Employment Services (ES)
English-as-a-Second Language Training (ESL)
On-the-Job-Training (OJT)
Vocational Training (VT)

Work Experience
Educational Services (EDS)
Other Employment-related Services

Counties may provide the services directly or contract with other agencies to provide them. However, counties are required to allocate at least 85 percent of their program allocations to employment and employment-related services and activities. The rest can be used for nonemployment-related services.

Greater Avenues for Independence

GAIN is a mandatory program to assist AFDC applicants and recipients become self-sufficient by providing them with the necessary skills to obtain/retain employment. Counties also may elect to serve RCA clients in their GAIN system.

Depending on their needs, GAIN participants are provided employment services and employment-directed training and education. The program takes into consideration the recipients' need for ESL and remedial education. Self-initiated training programs (limited to two years) and college programs (limited to two years) are allowed if they are tied to the local labor market.

Complimenting the employment-related services is a full range of supportive services to facilitate the recipients' successful participation in GAIN (i.e., child care, transportation assistance, and other ancillary services that assist in removing barriers to program participation).

Counties can use RSS and TA funding to pay for GAIN activities provided to AFDC recipients, and for those provided to RCA recipients if the county is mandating their participation in GAIN.

Special Programs

Mutual Assistance Associations

MAAs are private, nonprofit organizations established and operated by refugees. Qualified MAAs may apply for RSS and TA funds. In addition, they may apply for MAA Incentive Funds, part of the state's RSS allocation, which are provided to RSS-eligible counties for the provision of social adjustment and cultural orientation services.

The California Department of Social Services encourages MAAs to participate in the development of their county's plan for services to refugees and provide them with technical assistance related to the provision of those services.

Amerasian Special Needs

As a result of growing up as outcasts in Vietnam, arriving in this country with unrealistic expectations for gaining acceptance, lacking in formal education, and having limited employment skills, Amerasians need a broad array of services to successfully resettle in the United States. The Amerasians and their families are eligible for all the current services provided to other refugees and immigrants, but because of their special

circumstances the Office of Refugee Resettlement makes available additional funds to provide services that supplement those in place for the other two aforementioned groups. These supplemental services may include intensive case management and client tracking, crisis intervention, and in-depth counseling.

Since 1989, ORR has made Amerasian Special Needs funding available for areas that have a "cluster" of Amerasians. The funding level is $35,000 per site. For 1991-92, six counties in California received "cluster site" awards: Alameda, Los Angeles, Orange, Sacramento, San Diego, and Santa Clara.